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**ELWYN RICHARDSON AND THE  
EARLY WORLD OF ART  
EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
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by Margaret MacDonald

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## **Dedication**

*To my parents, Maynard and Liliana with love and gratitude*

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## Abstract

This study examines the work of Elwyn Stuart Richardson, director and teacher of Oruaiti School between 1949 and 1962, an experimental school in Northland, New Zealand and places it with the context of the history of art education in New Zealand. After documenting the historical and educational reform contexts of the first half of the twentieth century, Richardson's philosophy of art education is framed through an analysis of moments of his early life, schooling and teaching experiences. Richardson (1925-) is best known for his book *In the Early World* published by the New Zealand Council of Educational Research in 1964. The book describes his work as a teacher at Oruaiti and highlights his pedagogical belief that the most powerful learning arises out of children's own lives and experiences, that learning through the arts raises students' potential for self-knowledge, critical discernment, imagination, understanding, awareness and empathy for others, and that the arts have an important role to play in the fostering of community and social reform.

The administration of art and craft education in the New Zealand primary school during Richardson's years at Oruaiti was shaped by early advances in manual and technical education. The development of these reforms and the varied educational doctrines school officials used to advocate for the inclusion of these subjects in the curriculum are examined from 1885 to 1920. As well, significant educational policies and events in the 1920s provided exposure to progressive education ideology from abroad. These initiatives contributed to the great interest in child art which grew out of the New Education movement of the 1930s. New ideas about the development of artistic ability in children led to innovative policies in art and craft education that transformed teaching practices and the place of art and craft in New Zealand schools during the 1940s and 1950s. The newly formed Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education in 1946 reorganised the administration of art education to change public perceptions of art, create contexts of art appreciation and develop community education in tandem with primary school art

education. Examining Richardson's educational biography is another lens used to understand his philosophy and pedagogy. Oruaiti's status as an experimental school is explored through the unique relationship of Oruaiti School to the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education. Further, Richardson's developing educational philosophy, in particular his ideas about artistic ability in children and the growth of aesthetic standards, is explored relative to the teaching practices of his day. The study also uncovers the critical role that science played in Richardson's educational pedagogy and curriculum and the profound influence Richardson's early educative experiences were to have on the development of his educational philosophy. Locating Richardson's work within its historical context demonstrates both that he worked in an environment which was hospitable to educational experimentation in the field art and crafts, and that, on many levels, he transcended the educational practices of his times.

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## Abbreviations

<b>AJHR</b>	Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives
<b>CSA</b>	Canterbury Society of Arts
<b>NEF</b>	New Education Fellowship
<b>NZCER</b>	New Zealand Council for Educational Research
<b>NZEI</b>	New Zealand Educational Institute
<b>NZG</b>	New Zealand Gazette
<b>NZJES</b>	New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies
<b>RCA</b>	Royal College of Art
<b>WEA</b>	Workers' Educational Society



**He toi whakairo he mana tangata**

**Where there is artistic excellence there is human dignity**

# **Part One**

## **Introduction and Methods**

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## *Through The Window, November 1953*

The one-room school in rural Northland is filled with the sound of twenty-six students, from five to twelve years old, talking as they work. Mobiles hang from the rafters and the walls are covered in vivid paintings, lino and wood block prints. A small electric kiln occupies the corner of the room and a cluster of pots and clay masks sit drying on a shelf nearby. Their teacher, Elwyn S. Richardson, a 28 year old with a passion for palaeontology and malacology, moves from child to child as they discuss their work.

The paddocks beyond the classroom have been cleared of gorse and scrub and are now run with cattle. Beyond these the Maungataniwha range of hills define the skyline and feed the Oruaiti River that winds its way around the valley floor and comes within a stone's throw of the classroom.

On the teacher's desk in the front of the room sits a large professional microscope. The children take turns placing objects that have attracted them beneath the lens: a leaf, a wing, the bony leg of a wasp. As they look through the lens, they enter a magical world. As each child turns away filled with wonder, they know now, even without the microscope, that things are different out there. Even if it was not their turn for the instrument, they can begin to imagine what those things were like or could be. They are encouraged by their teacher to record their observations through written descriptions, drama, drawing or sculpture and to think of other ways to make use of what they have discovered.<sup>1</sup>

## *Background to the Research*

The teacher, Elwyn Richardson, was drawn to Northland because he too was captivated by what he had seen through the lens of his microscope. A childhood immersed in nature on Waiheke Island and three years of chemistry, botany and geology at the University of Auckland had sparked a keen interest in the study of native fossils and fauna. The remote sole-charge posting at Oruaiti School advertised in 1949 offered him the opportunity to follow his interest in molluscan palaeontology and to construct his own pedagogy,

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<sup>1</sup> This vignette was co-constructed by Jim Allen and myself. Jim Allen spent many hours working alongside children at Oruaiti School in his capacity as a Field Officer for the Art and Craft Branch. Richardson first began at Oruaiti School in 1949. This scene best describes his classroom from about 1953 onwards, when his own integrated program was well under way.

curriculum and assessment, away from the immediate gaze of both school inspectors and colleagues.

Over the next thirteen years, from 1949 to 1962, Richardson developed his own philosophy of education. He discarded the official syllabus and turned instead to the children's lives and immediate environment for the basis of his curriculum. Using the children's natural curiosity and interest, Richardson taught them how to look closely at the world around them and to observe and record their new discoveries and their own responses to these. From here, he developed a dynamic programme that was anchored in the children's surroundings and real lives. Through environmental study the children learned the basis of scientific method, and brought these skills to bear on studies that spanned all subjects. It was a revolt away from science as a separate subject to an integrated programme of arts and science. Instead of science workbooks to mark, there were experimental results on a chart, creatures observed at various stations in the classroom and paintings, poems, stories and plays about what the children had discovered.

Richardson used the children's interests as inspiration for regular formal lessons in maths, social studies, geography, history and English. A child wondering aloud at the full stop after the 'Mr.' on an envelope, for instance, led to a week-long ethnographic study of errors on personal and business envelopes. This work focussed on grammar, formal and informal writing, but also became a social study of their community as they analysed envelopes, researched and drew conclusions about the writers, their occupations and their errors. Similarly, mustering and fishing – activities in which many of the students participated – provided the basis for the study of maps and geography. Number work was structured around difficulties posed by deep water fishing with the effects of current, depth and wind all providing problems that were worked out and recorded by the children. Language work and painting frequently evolved from these lessons, as the topic captured the children's imaginations.

Learning was often thematically based and group studies emerged out of real problems in the local community, such as an infestation of porina moth on cattle-grazing land, the spread of gorse on farms, or the salinity levels detected by the children in the river where they swam. It was a school without walls. Nature walks revealed large seams of different coloured clays on exposed ridges and in the original forest patches of the valley. These

discoveries led to the introduction of pottery, which necessitated surveying, testing, and recording different local types of clay to establish which seams to mine. In this study, for example, the children collected samples which were rolled into 20cm strips and marked off into halves and quarters. These were labelled with a description of the clay bed and its location. The strips were measured daily and eventually fired. Changes in weight and shrinkage were recorded in a percentage basis in fractions and decimals and principles such as parallax error<sup>2</sup> were introduced. The children trialled methods to improve the plasticity and strength of the different types of clay and devised ways to store it, so that it remained soft and workable. Firing the kiln provided another opportunity to teach measurement as the children calculated the time and energy consumed in a single firing. They experimented with making different kinds of pots, masks, plaques and with methods of decorating. They learned about the limitations of the clay and developed their own sense of mastery and aesthetic standards as they progressed. Eventually they outgrew the small electric kiln and built a large brick one fired on waste oil in the schoolyard. On firing days the keenest potters would stay late into the evening, watching with Richardson, until the salt glaze was applied and the kiln was sealed for the night.

Richardson viewed himself more as an ‘identifier’ than a teacher, preferring to question or to wonder aloud, rather than to tell. He observed the children closely, listened to their conversations and watched their play, viewing this as a “hunting ground” for poetry, story and the field of the imagination.<sup>3</sup> At a time when most teachers closely followed the official syllabus, he viewed his curriculum as a work in progress in which the interests and needs of the children and the urgencies of the environment could influence the schedule on an ongoing basis. A storm, a visitor, a new bull in the paddock next door, the discovery of a wasp nest or another spontaneous event could all change the programme.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the phenomenon whereby an object appears displaced or different when viewed from two different angles of sight. The angle or semi-angle between these two different lines reveals the parallax and can be used to determine distance (*Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Elwyn Stuart Richardson (ESR) Personal Communication, March 15, 2006.

## *The Context*

The small farming community of Oruaiti lies in the foothills between Doubtless Bay and Whangaroa Harbour on the east coast of the Northland Peninsula. Known in Maori legend as the tail of Te Ika-a-Maui (the fish of Maui) the Peninsula covers nearly 13,000 square kilometres (more than 3 million acres). On the western side the long sweep of coastline is broken by the large Hokianga and Kaipara harbours that extend inland and merge with the rivers that flow from the volcanic Maungataniwha Ranges.

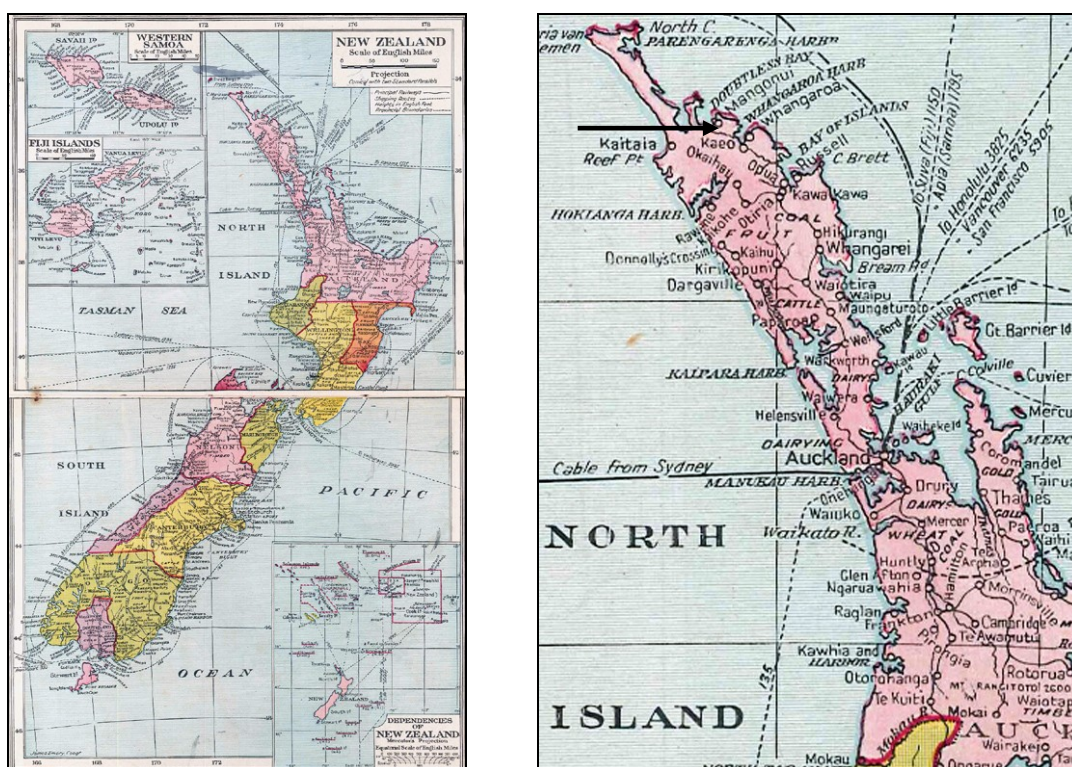


Figure 1: New Zealand and Far North Region. Oruaiti School is south of Mangonui<sup>4</sup>

Separated by a backbone of mountainous ranges that runs up the centre of the North Island, the eastern coastline is more uneven than the western and interrupted by rocky outcrops and low lying hills. These descend into lowland forests of tawa, towai, maire,

<sup>4</sup> *Philips School Atlas of the World and the Commonwealth of Australia Specialised*, Whitcombe and Tombs, Sydney, 1943.

miro, rimu and kauri, which overlook the string of bays and inlets that trace the tail fins of Maui's fish in the Pacific Ocean.

The Oruaiti community in the 1950s was culturally and religiously diverse but close-knit, coming together for mustering, docking, shearing, spring sales, country club shows and formal education. Most of the children came from well-established early farming families, whose great-grandparents settled in the Oruaiti Valley region in the 1830s and were predominantly of Exclusive Brethren faith. These large-scale successful farmers often combined dairy Jersey cows and beef Herefords with small-scale pig farming, poultry and bee keeping. Several Maori farmers in the community worked for the Brethren farmers as stockmen working with their own horses and packs of dogs, often in exchange for sheep. Some of the families were of mixed Maori and European descent as a result of marriages between three early European settlers and local Maori women in the 1830s.<sup>5</sup> However, the Brethren families socialised exclusively with each other and because of their faith, shunned films and non-Biblical books and ate meals apart from non-Brethren.

Most children walked barefoot to school, some travelling as far as five miles from farms in the valley and the surrounding bays – Waimahana, Hihi, Mangonui. Others cut through paddocks or hitched rides with passing farmers, road workers or cream trucks. Older children helped with milking and feeding-out before school. Most of the Maori families were Catholics whose children had traditionally attended Waitaruki convent school near Kaeo. A few years after Richardson took up the position at Oruaiti School fifteen of these children moved to the school. Most had already learned to speak English from the sisters at the convent, but for the younger Maori children who enrolled over the next thirteen years, Oruaiti School was their first introduction to the English language.

Oruaiti School has changed considerably from 1949 to 2010, the time of this writing. The last 60 years have seen several new principals come and go. In the 1990s, 96 per cent of students were Maori. Today there are approximately 88 students, a number of whom are grandchildren of the students who attended in Richardson's years. The school still has a strong Maori community with 45 per cent of students identifying as tangata whenua.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> One of the early settlers, James Berghan, married a daughter of chief Ururoa. Thomas Flavell and Steven Wrathall were on the same schooner named 'Darling' and also married local "Maori girls of high lineage". Gwenyth Frear, *The River, the Valley and the People: A Story of Oruaiti Spanning 140 Years* (Far North District: G. Frear, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Tangata whenua: people of the land

area remains slightly below the national median in income and employment, with the school accorded a decile rating of four based on the socio-economic background of the community.<sup>7</sup> The Northland economy has always been closely tied to farming. Over the past decades the land has been largely broken in for grazing and along with the increasing mechanisation of dairy farming, this has resulted in a shortage of work available for the families who live in the area today.

### ***Key Elements of Richardson's Approach***

The issues facing Richardson when he first began were complex. Apart from two years probationary training working at Puni School near Pukekohe, Richardson was, in his early twenties, very much a beginning teacher. During his time at Oruaiti School he won the support of parents from very different religious and cultural backgrounds, developed ways of working in a bicultural classroom with students who ranged from four to twelve years old, many of whom had English as a second language, and navigated inter-tribal tensions, which existed between some of Maori students. He incorporated Te Reo into his classroom, shunned corporal punishment and created a democratic learning environment in which the cultural diversity of the community and the students was both respected and celebrated.<sup>8</sup> At this point it is sufficient to point out that the separate Native School system for Maori students in New Zealand was only disbanded in 1969, corporal punishment in state schools became illegal in 1990, and it is only in recent years that teacher-training colleges have incorporated Te Reo into their courses. As a corollary to this, in the beginning years, Richardson also battled with school inspectors and the educational bureaucracy as he sought to prove that his alternative programme adequately covered the syllabus. In 1949 Richardson was, indeed, radical and in many respects educationally ahead of his times.

Richardson's innovative approach can only be understood by situating his work within the historical landscape of his times. My desire to locate Richardson (an experimental educator) in his historical context is based on the view, articulated famously by Karl Marx, that although we make our own history, we make it "under circumstances directly found,

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<sup>7</sup> Decile one schools draw their students from areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage, while decile ten students are from areas of least socio-economic disadvantage. As at March 2009 the Northland region had the highest unemployment rate (8.3 per cent) in the country and the lowest economic growth (-3.3 per cent).

<sup>8</sup> Te Reo: Maori language.



given and transmitted from the past.”<sup>9</sup> My turn to both history and biography in my research was based on an overarching belief that each field has something to offer the other, with distinct opportunities and different requirements. An educational history requires an examination of broad and specific developments in philosophy, policy and practices over a given period of time. It is through a critical examination of these developments that we come to understand the way in which our ideas about aims and purposes of education are formed and reformed over time, and through historical analysis that we can make informed assessments about the evolution, development and uptake of specific curricular reforms as they translate from policy into practice. Educational biography, in contrast, takes as its focus the role of the individual in history and involves the personal, interpersonal and social contexts of the individual in relation to his or her philosophical development. It is through studying the life of the individual and their singular course of action within the constraints and opportunities of their social context, that we can gain insights into broader contextual meaning and the life of the collective.<sup>10</sup>

In order to understand Richardson’s contribution to New Zealand education, it was essential for me to locate him historically within the social and educational context in which he flourished. The study of critical events and movements in (Part Two) of this thesis examines the ways in which Richardson’s school and its curriculum was inextricably linked to, even contingent upon, the policies, key events and curricular reforms that preceded him and the largely hospitable educational environment in which he worked. As a counterpoint to this historical approach, the biographical explication of Richardson’s philosophy and pedagogy in (Part Three), addresses the way in which he also rejected, modified and transcended the educational thinking and practice of his times.

Richardson’s philosophy was based on his belief that all real learning must be anchored in personal experience. It was this conviction that provided the foundation for his developmental approach to education. Central to this was his theory of integration, a personalised process in the arts whereby children moved from one expressive medium to another, between all subject areas. His concept of integration was based on the belief that paint, clay, language, dance, drama offered different possibilities for expression and that often a child was not able to express all s/he had to say about a subject in a single medium.

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<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, Die Revolution (New York 1852).

<sup>10</sup> J Gary Knowles and Ardra L Cole, *Lives in Context: The Art of Life History Research* (California: AltaMira Press, 2001), p. 22.

In this way a painting about a pukeko might lead to a lino cut, which might lead to a poem, a dance or a play.<sup>11</sup> In each, the theme remains the same, but the motivation to express something new or different is brought to fruition in the new medium or in the reworking of the same medium. In some cases the expression may become simpler than an earlier statement, but better articulated. An overworked pot, for example, might be superseded by a very simple pot, sparingly decorated. Richardson's theory of integration was informed by his conception of artistic ability as a universal human attribute, his well-developed ideas about the nature of artistic development in children and a firm belief in the learning potential of every child.

As well as fostering the role of the imagination in intellectual work, Richardson developed a range of pedagogical strategies to help students internalise discriminating criteria for their expressive work in all media. The children's creative work was discussed and evaluated by students at a weekly class meeting. Run by the students, these assessment sessions led to the growth of shared values and a class culture akin to a community of artists working together. The students themselves decided which work was 'good enough' to be published in the school journal, or displayed in special places in the classroom. In this way, a shared sense of aesthetic values was established. In time, the children were able to recognise that what was good work for one child might be different in quality from that of another, but that certain criteria such as sincerity, effort and originality, remained the same. A school culture and learning community developed in which sincerity and respect were paramount. The students learned to trust their own assessments and to follow their own self-imposed standards while actively contributing to the growth of shared values. Through these methods Richardson developed an approach that facilitated the growth of internal standards that were continually rising, as opposed to the externally imposed fixed standards common in schooling today.

### ***Richardson and the Institutional Interface***

Richardson had a complex relationship with the bureaucracy of education. He was on the 'outside' in terms of his methods and ideas, but 'inside' in terms of the strong support he received from within the Department of Education at the time. He was granted the emancipating status of an 'experimental school' by the Director of Education, Clarence

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<sup>11</sup> Pukeko: common name, derived from Maori, for the blue and black swamp-hen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*).

Beeby and received considerable support from Gordon Tovey, National Supervisor of Art and Craft, in the form of resources and professional support. Ultimately, however, Richardson felt that his work at Oruaiti was being used to garner support for a subsequent educational experiment, the Northern Maori Project, formed by the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education. As result, Richardson sought to distance himself from this project and in the process alienated a number of people within the Art and Craft Branch who felt they had been most supportive to him. In the end he found himself largely cut off from Tovey's support and the resources of the Department.

Significantly, after publication in 1964 of his book on Oruaiti *In The Early World* by the New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER) and when enthusiasm for learning through the arts had cooled, Richardson found himself unable to publish anything further. Beeby, who was Assistant Director of Education in 1939 and Director from 1940-1960, and who had been supportive of Richardson's work at Oruaiti, left to accept a position as New Zealand Ambassador to France for UNESCO in 1960. His vague promise that Richardson's report on the experiment might result in the award of a degree had not materialised. Difficulties with inspectors in the early years of the Oruaiti experiment continued to rankle Richardson and were compounded over time by personal and professional tensions that escalated between Gordon Tovey and himself. His self-published works immediately after *In The Early World* reflect his sense of isolation in his last few years at Oruaiti and are laced with barbed references to educational administrators, "little grey men," as he called them. For the Pantheon edition of *In The Early World* published in the United States in 1969, for example, Richardson asked the NZCER editor John Watson, to change the original inscription to read: "*This book is dedicated to the little grey bastards of the department without whose meddling and pimping ways this work would never have been started.*"<sup>12</sup> In the end, Richardson decided against this dedication, for reasons that are discussed more fully in chapter ten. Reading these early works, it is clear that at times, Richardson felt professionally abandoned, misunderstood and manipulated, even though in terms of practical support he was generally well treated.

Richardson might be seen as both a rebel and a reformer in his relationship to the philosophy of the day. He was both respected and feared by the school inspectors whom

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<sup>12</sup> ESR to John Watson, (Archives NZ, AAVZ W3418 box 17 c3/1, *In The Early World* USA, 1968-70).

he challenged with his progressive philosophy and innovative methods. However, in many ways he was the unconscious beneficiary both of other people's ideas and of a great transformation in the role of art and craft in the primary school. An awareness of the historical background of these influences, particularly in the field of curriculum reform in art and craft education, is necessary in order to understand the constraints and possibilities of the educational context in which Richardson worked and to understand his contribution to New Zealand education. In this sense, a study of Oruaiti School writ large is also a history of the social and intellectual currents in the development of art and craft teaching in New Zealand primary education in the first half of the twentieth century.

Richardson's work at Oruaiti was followed by a brief period lecturing in English at Auckland Teachers' College from 1961-2. After this he spent two years as Principal at Hay Park School in Auckland, followed by eighteen years as Principal of Lincoln Heights School, from 1966 to 1969 and 1972-1987. The publication of his book *In The Early World*, led to an invitation from the University of Colorado in 1969 to work as a visiting lecturer. Over the next three years Richardson divided his time between the University of Colorado in Boulder, Bank Street College of Education in New York, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Washington in Seattle, and South Dakota State University (SDSU) in Brookings. As part of this work, under the auspices of SDSU, Richardson worked with students and faculty from Oglala Lakota College to enhance visual and performing arts in schools on the Native American Pine Ridge Reservation. After his service during these years, Richardson was nominated for an honorary doctorate degree from SDSU for his service and leadership in education in 2001.

While Richardson was working in the United States, a family crisis in New Zealand led him to turn down the offer of an assistant professorship with tenure from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and to abandon the doctorate he had begun based on his experimental creative writing programme at the Booker T. Washington School in New York. He returned to New Zealand in 1972 and resumed his position as Principal of Lincoln Heights School until retiring in 1987 at 62 years of age. After this, Richardson became somewhat invisible in the field of New Zealand teacher education. Although his name is generally recognised by educationalists of his generation and those who are in their 50s and 60s today, it is not well known by beginning teachers. In 1989, he received a Queen's Service Order award for his services to education and in 2005 he received an

honorary doctorate in literature from Massey University. In August 2007, the Auckland Faculty of Education honoured Richardson's work by opening a permanent display of artefacts from Oruaiti School in the main foyer of the building.

### *The Legacy*

The question of Richardson's legacy is a complex one. Some would argue that short-lived experimental schools such as Oruaiti are little more than extraordinary aberrations on our educational horizon. Frequently led by captivating individuals, they blaze across the sky and then fade from view. English art critic and poet, Sir Herbert Read, was of this opinion when he visited New Zealand in 1954 and was shown examples of the art and language work by pupils at Oruaiti School. After looking over the drawings and photographs, Read is said to have replied, "Well, as I travel the world, I find these odd people in little schools doing these extraordinary things, but it goes no further you know."<sup>13</sup> Read's critique remains at the centre of debate today between those who advocate the league table, test-and-teach approach to education, which is increasingly the norm, and those who promote a broader more progressive educational view. The Oruaiti experiment offers a case study of the way in which progressive educational ideas were instantiated on the ground and manifested themselves in a New Zealand classroom setting. What shape did these ideas take? What was left out, what was added to? What remains? In this sense an examination of Richardson's progressive educational methods can be viewed as a timely counterpoint to the standardised test score approach, raising questions which remain important to policy makers, teachers, parents and students alike.

Although there are some very good general histories of the state education system in New Zealand, records of individual experimental schools remain scarce. Books written by New Zealand schoolteachers about their own pedagogy and teaching are rare and educational biographies of exceptional New Zealand teachers even more so. The dearth of literature is a topic worthy of further study in itself. In an article on knowledge and teaching, Lee S. Shulman, president emeritus at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, commented on the general lack of educational history observing, "One of the frustrations of teaching as an occupation and profession is its extensive individual and collective amnesia, the consistency with which the best creations of its practitioners are

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, Jim Allen, October 7, 2005.

lost to both contemporary and future peers.”<sup>14</sup> Even more uncommon than accounts written by or about teachers, are historical records that address student experiences of schooling. New Zealand educational historians Openshaw, Lee and Lee observe that although there has been a “beneficial upsurge in history of education writing in recent years in New Zealand, there remain serious gaps in our knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> They highlight the “near total neglect of the classroom in both old and new historical writing” and argue that “too often both liberals and revisionists have utilised official accounts and official syllabuses, with the result that the voices of both teachers and children are rarely heard.”<sup>16</sup>

Their concerns echo those of McCulloch who suggests there is a need for educational historians, “to be much more sensitive to tentative notions of alternative possibilities, to schemes that went awry, to short lived schools with distinctive approaches, in order to escape the teleology of traditional New Zealand educational history.”<sup>17</sup> Examining the Oruaiti School experiment presents one such alternative possibility and to explore this legacy is to present a dimension of educational culture which was not being reproduced in other settings at this time. Bailyn suggests that “education not only reflects and adjusts to society; once formed it turns back upon it and acts upon it.”<sup>18</sup> To address this, he states, is to conceptualise education “not only as a formal pedagogy but as the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across generations.”<sup>19</sup> As will be discussed more fully, the Oruaiti experiment not only had a profound influence on the students and their families but also shaped and impacted the practice of visiting art specialists who carried these progressive ideals into New Zealand schools under the auspices of the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education.

In an address titled “The Historian and Heritage Issues”, New Zealand historian Michael King could have been talking about educational history when he warned: “...There is a

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<sup>14</sup> Lee, S Shulman, “Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform,” *Harvard Educational Review* 57, no. 1 (1987).

<sup>15</sup> Roger Openshaw, Gregory Douglas Lee, and Howard F. Lee, *Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand's Educational History* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993), p.15.

<sup>16</sup> (Ibid).

<sup>17</sup> Gary McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction: The 1944 Education Act and the Twenty-First Century*, Woburn Education Series (Oregon: The Woburn Press, 1994), p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va. University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

danger in living in communities that are forever shedding old skins and making new ones” for in doing this, he says:

We erase the reference points by which people recognise their community and feel that their present is connected to a past. If people don’t feel that they have a past, that they only live in some kind of sensation-dominated continuous present, then it is more difficult for them to believe that they have a future.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Richardson’s Educational Writings***

Many of us first made our acquaintance with Richardson through his book *In The Early World*, a record of his experience at Oruaiti School from 1949 to 1961. ‘The Oruaiti Experiment’ as it became known, was approved on the understanding that Richardson would “write a yearly report and a serious document at the conclusion of the experiment.”<sup>21</sup> *In The Early World* was the product of this. Rich with illustrations of children’s remarkable art and language work, it tells the story of how Richardson’s students became increasingly aware of their own capacity for personal expression, while collectively establishing a shared understanding of aesthetic values.

The publication of *In The Early World* was both a positive and a negative event for Richardson. It catapulted him onto the international stage as a noteworthy progressive educator but it also marked what he saw as the betrayal of a promise that its publication would lead to a degree. The book was well received by the New Zealand educational establishment and widely taken up as a text by teacher training colleges in New Zealand in the 1960s and 1970s. It received a glowing review in the United States from educationist Joseph Featherstone, at Harvard University, who stated, “it may be the best book about teaching ever written.”<sup>22</sup> Featherstone’s review, which featured in the *New Republic* magazine, encouraged Pantheon to publish a Canadian and an American edition simultaneously in 1969.<sup>23</sup> Writing for *The New York Times Book Review* in September of that year, author and educator Jonathan Kozol found that Richardson’s work went “far

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<sup>20</sup> Michael King, *Tread Softly for You Tread on My Life: New and Collected Writings* (Auckland: Cape Catel, 2001), pp. 123-4.

<sup>21</sup> Elwyn Richardson, *Integration in Language Arts Expression* (Henderson, New Zealand: Taupaki Printery, 2004), p.14.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Featherstone, *Schools Where Children Learn* (New York: Pan Books, 1971), p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Featherstone, Per. Com., February 22, 2008. Note: The original publication date for *New Republic* review is unavailable, however, Featherstone states that this review was reproduced largely unaltered in his book cited above, pp. 101-107.

beyond any teacher or writer” he knew of and described the American publication as “an event of great importance”.<sup>24</sup> Over the next decade Richardson and his school became an international symbol of progressive education in New Zealand with a particular focus on arts and crafts.<sup>25</sup> His book was used in teacher education programmes in the United States, especially in the area of developing reading and writing skills in young children.<sup>26</sup>

Described as an ‘uneven’ and ‘almost wilful’ book in the foreword by John Melser, it is at first glance, a deceptively simple book. Rich with illustrations of children’s art and language work, it has an intimacy that is rare in books on education. As Richardson describes the students’ arrival at school early in the morning we learn their names, the location of their homes and something of their interests and families. Black and white photographs identify the children working intently on pottery, painting, sculpture and linocuts. Like a still life painting, the book’s “principal spatial value” is one of nearness.<sup>27</sup> Richardson brings the reader into the real world of the classroom revealing that which is usually overlooked with an unusual clarity of vision. As both teacher and writer, Richardson assumes an attentive ‘back-seat’ position, focussing on the artistic *processes* and *products* rather than on his own philosophy or development.

The emblematic nature of the book means that it stands alone in the way that a painting or an anthology might, leaving the reader aesthetically sated but filled with questions. A principal aim of this study is to explicate more of the story behind the book in terms of the man himself, his philosophy, and his experience of doing something different in New Zealand education. In this sense the study may stand alone, or as an adjunct to Richardson’s own writings. I do not intend to traverse the ground already covered in Richardson’s books, but to focus on significant elements that are missing from his writings. The passage of nearly half a century also provides a fleeting and finite opportunity for an analysis of the Oruaiti experiment through the perspectives of those who were at the centre – the students who feature in the pages of the book and Richardson himself, who at the time of writing is in his eighty-sixth year.

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<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Kozol, “In the Early World - Review,” *The New York Times Book Review*, September 14, 1969.

<sup>25</sup> The title of the Pantheon edition was *In The Early World: Discovering Art Through Crafts*. The NZCER edition published in 1964 was titled simply *In The Early World*

<sup>26</sup> Joint letter in support of Richardson’s honorary degree nomination from South Dakota State University: Dr Laurie Nichols, Dean and Professor College of Family and Consumer Science and Dr. Susan Brown-Sandberg Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, November 13, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 71.



## *Formulating the Questions*

No researcher is separate from the subject that interests them and my interest in Richardson is part of my desire to understand his work. Cole and Knowles make the observation that "...All research is in some way autobiographical...from conceptualisation through to representation and eventual communication of new understandings to others, any research project is an expression of elements of a researcher's life history."<sup>28</sup> They refer to the life history researcher as "the central "instrument" and the "prime-viewing lens." The researcher, they emphasise, "is a person and that person – along with his or her own complex personal history – is a guiding influence in all aspects of a study".<sup>29</sup> I am conscious that as a researcher, I am both behind the lens and in the picture.

I first heard of Richardson when the principal at my children's school held up his book, *In The Early World*, as an example of what creative education could be. I was struck by the exceptional quality of the children's creative writing and artwork and the glimpse the book offered of a teacher who was actively working out and refining his pedagogy based on a profound belief in the creative abilities of all children.

At the time I was introduced to the book I was teaching photography to children at a newly opened designated character school, the first of its kind in New Zealand. I was wearing multiple hats as a parent of two boys, a newly appointed board member on the first parent elected Board of Trustees, and as a participant in a Teacher Parent Research Community project run through the University of Canterbury. In addition to teaching photography over several years, I had also designed and taught a programme in a low decile primary school which was aimed at exploring photography as an alternative literacy for children who were perceived to be 'at risk' of failing at school. In this project, I worked intensively with a small group of predominantly Maori ten-year-old boys who through the language of photography came to reconceptualise themselves as learners as they recognised the value of their own way of looking at the world and the power of communicating this to others. As a photography teacher, I wondered how Richardson had drawn out such fine observation and authentic artistic expression from his students.

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<sup>28</sup> Knowles and Cole, *Lives in Context: The Art of Life History Research*. California, AltaMira Press, 2001, p.10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

It was clear from Richardson's book that fostering intellectual development and literacy through the arts was a central tenet of his approach and that in his classroom there were multiple languages and multiple technologies at work. The calibre of the artwork featured in the book was empirical evidence of exemplary art teaching and the successful growth of internally developed standards. However, the book did not address how Richardson's ideas grew and developed or what impelled his beliefs about the nature of artistic development in children. Nor did it speak to what Richardson's own experience of this development was, or what had influenced and sustained him in his work over these thirteen years.

As my research progressed, I discovered that Richardson rejected much of what both he and the school had come to represent. He felt strongly that he was 'his own product' and was not shaped or influenced by social or historical context. He solidly refused to accept the mantle of 'progressive educator' and dismissed the conceptualisation of the school as an experiment in art and craft education. He felt that interpretations of his work and his theory of integration in particular had been misinterpreted over the years. I found that not only was he still searching throughout our correspondence for a professional designation that felt comfortable to him, but he also rejected the academic language of education in our discussions of his work, finding something 'inherently wrong with it'. These issues are taken up in Part Three of the study.

Because of my involvement in progressive schools, both as a student myself and later as a parent, teacher and board member, the book also raised questions for me about the nature and trajectory of experimental schools: What kind of socio-political climate predisposed a government to take such risks in education? What broader intellectual and cultural currents produced an environment in which an experiment like Oruaiti could not only exist, but flourish? What permissions was he given by government education officials and how were these negotiated at the time? Once he began, how was he supported institutionally? How was it that art and craft education came to be viewed at this time as a catalyst for broad educational reform?

It is the examination of this implicit tension between social context and individual endeavour, which James Wertsch describes as the task of sociocultural analysis. We have a tendency, he suggests, "to take either mental functioning or sociocultural setting as

fundamental and as giving rise to the other.” To explore these interrelationships, is to expose what he refers to as “the irreducible tension” between human action and cultural context.<sup>30</sup> In this sense biography that is grounded in historical perspective and which focuses on both the evolution of educational reforms and the actions and roles of individual teachers offers a perspective on the important role that context plays in the construction of an individual teacher’s leadership.<sup>31</sup> Further, the close study of the historical context of Richardson’s work offers an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the ways in which social forces and individual development are inextricably related. Yet within these perspectives there remain possibilities for personal agency.

### ***Organisation of Thesis***

The thesis is organised into three parts. Part One of the study (Chapters One and Two) introduces the study and details the sources and methods used. Part Two, (Chapters Three to Seven) is a history of the development of art and craft education in the first half of the twentieth century in the New Zealand primary school and explicates the social and cultural educational historical context out of which the Oruaiti experiment emerged. Part Three, (Chapters Eight to Ten) is an educational biography of Richardson that examines the development of his educational philosophy and pedagogy within the context of the Oruaiti School experiment.

Part Two of the thesis is comprised of five historical chapters. In each chapter, I delineate a significant curriculum reform or key event that had important implications for the development of arts and crafts education and identify the influential people at the centre of these changes. I follow this with an examination of the orientation to curriculum, and to arts and crafts education in particular, that informed these policy reforms.

The first of the historical chapters, Chapter Three, sets out the background to the development of art and craft education in the New Zealand primary school from 1885 to 1920 and examines a series of noteworthy reforms in early manual and technical education, which foreground the reforms in art and craft education the late 1940s and 1950s.

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<sup>30</sup> J Wertsch, V., *Mind as Action* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> John V Brandon, “Towards a Reconsideration of Biography as an Instrument for Studying Leadership in Educational Administration,” *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy* 75, no. 21 (2002): p. 656.

Chapter Four focuses on international influences on the growth of ideas about art education in New Zealand. Three significant events in the 1920s and 1930s – the Carnegie scholarships, the La Trobe Scheme and the New Educational Fellowship Conference are examined in relation to the way in which they provided important conduits for exposure to international ideas in the art and crafts movement and progressive education ideology. The 1929 Syllabus of Instruction for Primary Schools is also analysed as an example of a curricular reform in which many of these progressive liberal educational ideas were manifested.

Chapter Five examines the great fascination in child art that arose out the educational ferment in the 1930s. The ideas of Franz Cizek, Herbert Read and Viktor Lowenfeld are examined in relation to the growth of ideas in New Zealand education about the nature of artistic development in children.

Chapter Six examines two significant policies in art and craft education in the decades of the 1940s and 1950s and brings the historical background up to the time that Richardson began working at Oruaiti School in 1949. The first part of the chapter explores the instrumental affect the Emergency Schooling Scheme had on the development of art and craft in schools. The second part of this chapter examines the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme.

Chapter Seven focuses on the birth of the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education and examines the ideological motivations for its establishment and the administration of art education within the Branch. This chapter also examines the work of the art advisors and their role in changing public perceptions of art through the creation of contexts of art appreciation and the development of community education. The final part of this chapter examines Gordon Tovey's philosophy and his leadership in the context of these reforms.

Part Three of the thesis, Chapters Eight to Ten, is an intellectual and educational biography of Elwyn Richardson. Chapter Eight explores critical moments in Richardson's own early education and examines the relationship of Oruaiti School to the Department Education and the Art and Craft Branch in particular.

Chapter Nine examines Richardson's scientific educational philosophy and the development of his environmental curriculum at Oruaiti School. Chapter Ten explores Richardson's democratic child-centred approach to education, his theory of integration, and the growth of aesthetic standards at Oruaiti School.

The final chapter of the thesis, Chapter Eleven, brings the two parts of the thesis together and addresses my understandings, which emerged as a result of analysing both the significant role of historical developments in the arts and crafts during the fifty years before Richardson began at Oruaiti, while also exploring the work of Richardson as a successful and innovative educator.

The thesis concludes with a brief epilogue in the form of a short photographic essay, which documents Richardson's return to Oruaiti School in September 2008.

## Chapter 2: Sources and Methods

The writing of lives... is closely related to the discoveries of history. It can claim the same skills. No lives are led outside history or society; they take place in human time. No biography is complete unless it reveals the individual within history, within an ethos and a social complex. In saying this we remember Donne: no [one] is an island unto himself.  
– Leon Edel<sup>1</sup>

### Overview

The decision to employ a qualitative research approach in this study was based on the interpretive nature of the research topic. Qualitative methods are used across a range of different disciplines and in the context of various theoretical paradigms.<sup>2</sup> A qualitative approach recognises the value-laden nature of inquiry and the subjective, mediated nature of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> It is characterised by a commitment to interpreting phenomena and understanding behaviour within natural settings and from the subject's own frame of reference. The title of the dissertation, *Elwyn Richardson and the Early World of Art Education in New Zealand* frames Richardson's intellectual biography against the social and historical context of his times. Conceptually Richardson's biography sits at the centre of the dissertation, which seeks to explicate his philosophy and pedagogy through framing moments of his early life, schooling experiences and teaching experience within the historical developments and intellectual currents in art education in the New Zealand primary school in the first half of the twentieth century. The design of the dissertation is driven by a belief, articulated above, that history and biography are inextricably linked and that one can not be understood in isolation from the other. A view of 'biography as

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Edel, *Writing Lives: Principia Biographics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), p. 20, cited in Stephen B Oates, *Biography as History*, 1990, pp. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Elliot Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* (New York: Macmillan 1991). Also, R Bogdan and Biklen S, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Education group, 2003).

history' suggests that in the story of a single human life we can understand something of the universal.<sup>4</sup> On a conceptual and methodological level, the use of a case study approach is in harmony with the interpretive and expansionist nature of biography. Both biography and case study tend more to the particular than to the general and at the end of both forms the reader is generally left with "more to pay attention to rather than less".<sup>5</sup> Chapter Eleven emerged as a result of this tendency.

While I have used a range of methods that I will subsequently describe, I have selected my use of correspondence as a primary method of data collection as the principal focus for this chapter. This allows me to address the epistemological issues relevant to qualitative methods within the context of an uncommon and infrequently used qualitative research methodology. I begin this discussion by briefly discussing the various methods I have selected for data collection such as photography, interviews, document analysis, and correspondence. The remainder of the chapter focuses on my use of correspondence as a method of data collection.

### *Selection of Participants*

Participants in this study can be divided into three general groupings. First, there was Richardson himself, who as the focus of the biography was distinct from other groups of participants. The second group of twenty-six individuals was comprised of Richardson's former colleagues, staff from the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education, teachers who had either met or worked with Richardson at Oruaiti or had been influenced by his work, artists, associates, academics and critics. Seventeen of Richardson's former Oruaiti students formed the third group of participants.

When I began this study, Richardson was 81 years of age. Richardson began teaching at Oruaiti in 1949. For some of his students therefore, fifty-seven years had passed since they

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen B Oates, *Biography as History*, Edmonson Lecture Series (Texas: Baylor University Press, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995).

were students at Oruaiti. At the time of commencing this study, many were in their mid-fifties while a number of former staff from the Art and Craft Branch were into their eighties. Five of Richardson's students had died prior to my beginning this study. Because of the age of participants I decided to proceed with interviews as soon as my research proposal was accepted, even though I was aware that both my research focus and questions would evolve over time as my knowledge and understanding increased.

It was relatively easy to contact Richardson and the former academics, education officials, artists and teachers who made up the second group of participants and who often had a public profile in their respective fields. However, it was more challenging to locate Richardson's former students. I was able to find a number through matching family names published in Richardson's book *In the Early World* with the telephone directory – a method that may not be possible today because of privacy concerns. Out of the seventeen former students I located, it was easier to find former male students because their names had not changed through marriage unlike most of the women. Therefore, there are more male participants (eleven) than women, (six). Because of the small scale of the Northland community where Oruaiti was located and the strong family links that exist between the families who attended the school, it was common for one student to provide contacts for others. This was particularly the case with former students who were Maori, which I discuss subsequently. Contact with former students was made via an introductory letter (see Appendix A) rather than by telephone, a method that allowed participants time to consider my proposal at their own pace before responding.

### ***Kaupapa Maori***

It was considerably more difficult to locate Richardson's former students who were Maori through standard means. Progress was made after meeting face to face with a respected elder in the community where participation was agreed and contact details for other members of the whanau were provided.<sup>6</sup>

Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that in the Maori language this custom is known as “‘Kanohi kitea’ or the ‘seen face’” and “conveys the sense that being seen by the people – showing your face, turning up at important cultural events – cements your membership

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<sup>6</sup> Whanau: extended family



within a community in an ongoing way and is part of how one's credibility is continually developed and maintained.”<sup>7</sup> Citing Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Russell Bishop suggests that traditional research methods in fact run counter to such cultural preferences:

Traditional research epistemologies have developed methods of initiating research and accessing research participants that are located within the cultural preferences and practices of the Western world, as opposed to the cultural preferences and practices of the Maori people themselves. For example, the preoccupation with neutrality, objectivity and distance by educational researchers emphasises these concepts as criteria for authority, representation, and accountability and, thus has distanced Maori people from participation in the construction, validation and legitimisation of knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

In Bishop's view, the problem is about more than creating an “empowering research relationship” in which personal investment and collaboration are necessary.<sup>9</sup> It is about making sure that the personal investment “is made on terms of mutual understandings and control by all participants” rather than on the researcher's terms alone.<sup>10</sup> Bishop recommends using concepts of *whakawhauaungatanga* (establishing extended family relationships) and *kaupapa Maori* in redefining the research relationship.<sup>11</sup> In *kaupapa Maori*, he explains, the “research cannot proceed unless *whanau* support is obtained, unless *kaumatua* provide guidance and unless there is *aroha* between the participant evidenced by an overriding feeling of tolerance, hospitality and respect for others, their aspirations and their preferences and practices.”<sup>12</sup>

The invitation at the beginning of my research by Richardson's former student and local *kaumatua*, Rewi Henare, to attend the launching ceremony for a new *waka* (a significant cultural event in the community), provided an opportunity for me to ‘show my face’ and to establish relationships with extended family. Attendance at this event was more about sharing my *whakapapa*,<sup>13</sup> who I was, who my family were and where we came from, past and present, than about my research agenda. Although the *waka* launching offered a rare

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<sup>7</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999), p.15.

<sup>8</sup> Russell Bishop, “Freeing Ourselves from Neocolonial Domination in Research - a *Kaupapa Maori* Approach to Creating Knowledge,” in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. N. K. Denzin, and Lincoln, Y. L. (Illinois: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 111.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Kaupapa Maori*: A plan of action based upon a foundation of understanding and knowledge created by Maori and expressing Maori preferences, principles, practices and values.

<sup>12</sup> Bishop, 2005, p. 120.

<sup>13</sup> *Whakapapa*: genealogy.

opportunity to arrange interviews with Richardson's former students who attended the event, I did not seek out former students or attempt to arrange interviews with students to whom I was introduced. I was aware of the cultural context and that the act of *kanohi kitea* or showing face, was a prerequisite to, but not a guarantee of, an opportunity to invite students to participate in my research. This conscious lack of agenda, what Bishop refers to as "not wanting anything from the research experience for one's self...not even the desire to empower someone", creates an opportunity for "attention and participation in 'kinship' terms".<sup>14</sup> Such participation can include family activities such as working, eating and making music and sleeping as a family together. Bishop suggests that through positioning themselves in this way researchers can facilitate for participants "a sense of themselves as agentic and of having an authoritative voice".<sup>15</sup> He makes the important point that this is "not a result of the researcher 'allowing' this to happen or 'empowering' participants; it is the function of the cultural context in which the research participants are positioned, negotiate and conduct the research."<sup>16</sup>

I found there was a tension between the critical function and agenda of the cultural context and the pressures of the research agenda, which were bounded by traditional considerations of resources such as time and efficiency. Setting my research agenda aside required me to re-examine concepts such as time, resources and efficiency and the influence these brought to the research agenda. For example, expressions such as 'wasting time', 'budgeting time', 'marking time', 'time is money' all suggest that in western culture concepts of time are tied to concepts of value and resources. Closely related to this are the concepts of efficiency and responsibility. To be efficient in research for example, one needs to accomplish as much as possible within a given time frame, in an organised way and without waste. Such pressures, frequently rooted in taken for granted western conceptualisations, can shut down opportunities for other ways of working.

School curriculum decision-making is another field where efficiency is a key objective. However, as Eisner suggests, such concepts are often antithetical to the very objectives they seek to accomplish:

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<sup>14</sup> Bishop, 2005, p. 123.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Efficiency is largely a virtue for the tasks we don't like to do; few of us like to eat a great meal efficiently, or to participate in a wonderful conversation efficiently, or indeed to make love efficiently. What we enjoy the most we linger over. A school system designed with an overriding commitment to efficiency may produce outcomes that have little enduring value.<sup>17</sup>

Correspondingly, in Maori culture as in other indigenous cultures, what constitutes a resource and what is considered to be of value may differ vastly from western conceptions. In a research context, such conceptions can influence methods in ways which shape and limit the process in both subtle and overt ways. These differences can best be summarised, Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests, through looking at the questions indigenous communities often ask at the beginning of a research project:

Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? While there are many researchers who can handle such questions with integrity there are many more who cannot, or who approach these questions with some cynicism, as if they were a test merely of political correctness. What may surprise people is that what may appear as the 'right', most desirable answer can still be judged incorrect. These questions are simply part of a larger set of judgements on criteria that a researcher cannot prepare for, such as: Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart: What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything?<sup>18</sup>

It was when I put my own research agenda aside and let the cultural context itself reveal its own agenda that I was invited into other domains. In these contexts, I established family relationships and was able to be useful to the community in ways that resulted in perspectives and understandings, which I could not have attained through other means.

## ***Data Collection Methods***

### **Photographic Documentation**

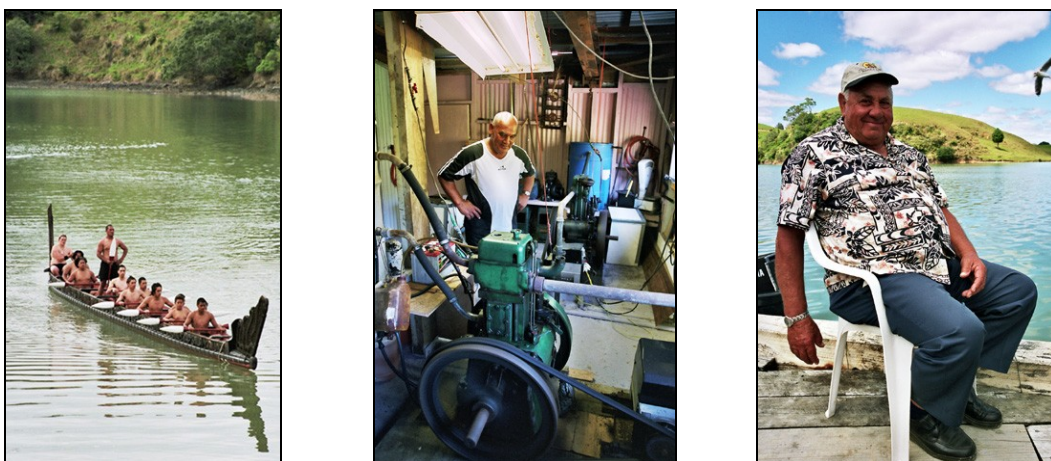
My desire to contribute to my research participants and communities led me to photograph events such as the waka launching ceremony mentioned above, as well as people and

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<sup>17</sup> E. Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 10.

things, which were of particular significance for participants. These included subjects such as a generator, a mountain, a future marae site, as well portraits of participants and family members. I provided copies of these photographs to participants and their families in print form as well as in digital form so that they could be used in other contexts. The dissemination of these images was left to participants. Over the course of my research these images appeared in a range of publications and media. For example, a photograph of the waka launching featured in a news bulletin issued by the Far North District Council. Two more photographs from this event featured on a website for a new marae project.<sup>19</sup> Portraits I took for Richardson appeared on the Massey University News website and in a published book,<sup>20</sup> while another portrait of a participant was used in a death notice by the family of the participant. In all of these instances except the first two, the photographs were not attributed because the participants had provided them. What was important in this instance was that I had been able to be of some practical use to participants, as they had to me.



**Figure 2: From left to right, Waka in Whaingaroa harbour, Rewi Henare and generator, Master waka carver and celestial navigation expert Hekenukumai (Hector) Busby November, 2005**

## Interviews

Where possible all interviews were conducted face to face and followed an unstructured or semi-structured format.<sup>21</sup> They were stimulus-based in that I brought with me photographs

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.mangatowai.maori.nz>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle=ahead-of-his-time-08-04-2005>.

Also: Colin Gibbs, *To Be a Teacher: Journeys Towards Authenticity* (Auckland: Pearson Education, 2006), p. 107.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix B for examples of the kind of questions former students were asked in interviews.

of students and artwork from Richardson's years at Oruaiti School as well as copies of his published books. For many students, these artefacts prompted vivid memories of the particular events and circumstances surrounding the creation of the art works pictured. While most students either had a copy of Richardson's book *In the Early World* or were familiar with their work reproduced in this, they were surprised to see their work featured in his subsequent publications as well as in his copious unpublished photographs, which I had compiled in an album form.

Each participant was given a copy of his or her interview transcript and offered the opportunity to amend and make additional comments. Most participants made minor adjustments to their transcripts so that it came closer to what they thought they had said or had wanted to say in the original interview. Several participants expressed some disappointment with their interview transcripts. While some were bothered by grammatical inconsistencies and informalities, which translated awkwardly into text, others were disturbed by what they viewed as pointless digressions in response to my questions. Some felt that they 'failed' the interview. The following excerpt from a reply I received from a participant in response to a transcript of our interview provides an example. This response was included with the heavily and laboriously edited 59-page transcript of our semi-structured interview:

Then I turned my attention to the transcript of our conversation and I am shocked at the way I dribbled on... I cannot see much of value in it for you. I would prefer for you to check with me anything that you thought worth including in your study, – and I can't see there would be much for you worth quoting. I am quite disturbed by my inability to stay on track and the mush of my replies...I actually feel very very bad and so unprofessional at this performance...Please be circumspect in quoting me ... I am very sorry to have been so useless to you...<sup>22</sup>

Two further participants had very similar responses. To address these concerns, I checked passages I wished to cite with participants before including these. While it can be logically assumed that a structured interview format decreases the likelihood of such an outcome, it does not necessarily deliver better data. Eisner's point about efficiency is germane in this context also. In all instances where participants deemed their interview unsatisfactory, they either requested a further interview for which they prepared well in advance, or, they supplied a written response to the questions in the previous interview. In both instances,

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<sup>22</sup> Confidential Per. Com., June 01, 2006.

the ‘unsatisfactory interview’ provided a fertile context for further dialogue, which may not have emerged in a more ‘efficient’ interview.

As the dissertation evolved, my focus on Richardson’s intellectual and educational biography meant that I drew upon the student interviews more as they embellished my conceptual explication of his philosophy and pedagogy than as individual recollections of schooling.

### **Document Analysis**

Documentary sources provided another method through which to gain perspectives on the research focus. The analysis of government documents such as school syllabi, curriculum statements, inspectors’ reports and correspondence within the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education shaped research questions and informed interviews with key participants. Documentary sources which provided international perspectives on Richardson’s work, included letters written in support of his nomination for an honorary doctorate from South Dakota State University in 2001, international reviews of his books as well as archived correspondence related to the publication of his books.

In a research context, the notion of ‘public record’ – particularly in relation to biographical material carries a particular weight, especially when it is the researcher alone who accesses it. Libraries and government departments have the power to restrict and embargo the use of certain sources of information. In addition, once material is in the ‘public domain’ unless there are unusual and complicating circumstances, it remains there indefinitely, open to public view, interpretation and dissemination. Although anyone is permitted to view unrestricted archival collections, for many participants archives are specialised places, which they are unlikely to visit, or attempt to navigate. The use of archived correspondence and official documents can therefore undermine research approaches and methods that are participatory and non-hierarchical in nature.

Because the use of archived correspondence in my research was contemporaneous with my correspondence, I was in the unique position of discussing letters written to, from and about Richardson during the 1950s to 1970s in my letters to him forty years later. The decision to offer Richardson the opportunity to comment on ‘official correspondence,’ documents and reports written about himself, which were housed in the public domain

provided another way of opening up new avenues of dialogue and challenging the conception of research as a remote academic exercise. This redistribution of power, while it may be labour intensive and complex, invariably enriched data in ways, which would not have been possible if official documentary sources were interpreted in isolation.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes of the concept of ‘researching back,’ which she views as being in the “same tradition of ‘writing back’ or ‘talking back,’ which characterises much of the post-colonial or anti-colonial literature”.<sup>23</sup> In the same way, sharing archival sources with participants provides a means to address the imbalance of power inherent in the research relationship. Sharing these official sources with Richardson meant that he was offered a ‘right of reply’ to the permanent and public records written about him. This decision was also based on an acknowledgement that the study of a life, whether it is a slice of a professional life or an entire personal biography, is ultimately based on the researcher’s interpretations and analysis, which like archived documents are both socially and culturally situated. As Stephen Oates observed, this is an essentially subjective process:

No two biographers, when confronted with the same body of evidence about a person, will reach the same set of conclusions. That is why there is no such thing as a definitive biography. The very process of biography – of one human being resurrecting another on the basis of human records, memories, and dreams – precludes a fixed and final portrait of any figure. There can be no definitive history of any kind that depends on records kept by human beings.<sup>24</sup>

## *The Use of Correspondence as a Method of Inquiry*

### **Overview**

Although considerable attention has recently been given to the use of email in qualitative literature, the use of handwritten letters remains largely unexplored in educational literature.<sup>25</sup> With researchers increasingly turning to the use of more modern methods to generate data such as computer mediated communication (CMC) including email and

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<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Oates, 1990, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Folkman Curasi, “A Critical Exploration of Face-to-Face Interviewing Vs. Computer-Mediated Interviewing,” *International Journal of Market Research* 43, no. 4 (2001); P Atkinson and A Coffery, “Analysing Documentary Realities,” in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. D. Silverman (London: Sage, 1998); C. Mann and Stewart F, *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Research Online*. (London: Sage, 2000).

online discussion forums in particular, it is unlikely that significant attention will be given to the use of handwritten letters in qualitative literature in the future. I address this gap in the literature through outlining some of the strengths, limitations and epistemological implications of this research method.

In general, where the use of correspondence is referred to in methodology texts it is usually considered alongside teacher stories, autobiographical writing, journal writing and field notes, as an example of the various ways data can be created by participants and researchers to “represent aspects of field experience.”<sup>26</sup> The emphasis is most commonly on the use of letters as supplementary data. Letter writing is generally construed as a peripheral activity yielding a unique source of data, which is not substantive enough in itself to warrant particular consideration as a method. Qualitative literature that focuses on the use of documentary sources presents cogent arguments for the use of letters, documents, diaries etc. as a primary source, however the focus is generally on archival sources, and the unique methodological issues associated with generating correspondence remain absent from discussion.<sup>27</sup>

Useful contributions to the literature beyond such methodology texts include Barton and Hall’s, *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, in particular, Anita Wilson’s *Visuality and Prisoners’ Letters* and Janet Maybin’s *Death Row Penfriends* (Chapters 9-10) which relate the authors’ experience using correspondence in their own research. Rebecca Earle’s *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, is also relevant.<sup>28</sup> Although neither of these books address the use of letter writing as a primary source of generating data in qualitative research, they do focus on letter writing as a social practice shaped by historical and cultural context. Literature concerning life history, auto/biography and narrative inquiry is also relevant to some of the broader epistemological questions raised by this method and I draw on sources from these fields subsequently.

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<sup>26</sup> D. Jean Clandinin, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), pp. 106-8; see also N. K. Denzin and Lincoln Y. L., eds., *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (California: Sage Publications, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Ian Hodder, “The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture,” in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, ed. N. K. Denzin, and Lincoln, Y. S. (California: Sage, 2003). Also, Lindsay Prior, “Doing Things with Documents,” in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. D. Silverman (California: Sage Publications, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> David Barton and Nigel Hall, *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, Studies in Written Language and Literacy; V. 9 (Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Pub., 2000); Rebecca Earle, *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).



In the few examples found in qualitative research where correspondence has been used as a primary method, it has been employed in the context of group studies and predominantly in the fields of nursing and sociology. Letherby and Zdrodowski used this method to explore women's experience of body image, infertility and involuntary childlessness.<sup>29</sup> Kralik, Koch and Brady used correspondence to understand the impact of chronic illness on the lives of 80 women, while Harris used correspondence to explore the life stories of six women who self-harmed over a period of 12 months.<sup>30</sup> All of these researchers wrote that the use of correspondence raised ethical considerations, dilemmas, questions and issues of practicality, which were unique to this particular method. I touch on some of these issues in the following section as I explore the methodological considerations that emerged through my own use of correspondence in researching Richardson's work.

### **How the Conversation Began**

My correspondence with Richardson began as a social courtesy when I wrote to thank him for copies of his books, which he sent to me after I accompanied two of my lecturers and a colleague to interview him early in 2005.<sup>31</sup> Although Richardson enjoyed this particular interview, he was unhappy with his responses and found rereading the transcript a disturbing experience.<sup>32</sup> When I began my dissertation in June of the same year, this previous interview experience was instrumental in cementing Richardson's desire to avoid such experiences in the future. It also predisposed him to view any alternative method of interviewing, such as letter writing, in a favourable light. In an immediate sense therefore, the use of letter writing as a methodology was both a reflexive and relatively spontaneous decision, which continued to develop in unexpected ways over the course of my research. On another level, however, as correspondent, I was positioned pedagogically as a guide alongside Richardson – asking questions, often simple ones, about a subject in which he was deeply interested. In this sense, methodologically I was speaking Richardson's epistemological and ontological language, a fact which offers a further explanation for Richardson's prolific and thoughtful correspondence over such a sustained period.

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<sup>29</sup> Gayle Letherby and Dawn Zdrodowski, "Dear Researcher: The Use of Correspondence as a Method within Feminist Qualitative Research," *Gender and Society* 9, no. 5 (1995).

<sup>30</sup> D Kralik, T Koch, and B M Brady, "Pen Pals: Correspondence as a Method for Data Generation in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 31(2000). Also, Jennifer Harris, "The Correspondence Method as a Data-Gathering Technique in Qualitative Enquiry," *International Journal of Qualitative methods* 1, no. 4 (2002).

<sup>31</sup> The article which emerged from this interview is B Kaur et al., "Searching for Equity and Social Justice: Diverse Learners in Aotearoa New Zealand," in *The Education of Diverse Populations: A Global Perspective*, ed. G Wan (Netherlands: Springer Science and Business Media, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> ESR., Per. Com., July 8, 2005.

The frequency of our letters varied, but began intermittently and increased in frequency to the point where it was common for me to receive two letters a week from Richardson. At the time of writing our correspondence, which is ongoing, but now less frequent, comprises approximately 315 letters or 1100 pages between us, and effectively constitutes a new body of educational writing by Richardson.

I anticipated that letter writing would provide a method through which to gain new understandings about Richardson's philosophy and pedagogy, in particular, his theory of integration, which I had struggled to comprehend from his published writings. From a biographical perspective I hoped letter writing would reveal more about his personal experience of doing something radically different in New Zealand education, a question not addressed in his books.

### **Letter Writing as a Method of Inquiry**

As a method, letter writing positions the researcher in a grey area somewhere between penpal confidante and interviewer. The distance invites a particular kind of considered intimacy, while the slightly removed process of 'conversing' through letters offers particular limitations and possibilities. The participatory nature of letter writing means that the mutual construction of knowledge is negotiated through a process that is more dynamic and often more intensive than other methods such as interviewing. In the most basic sense, for instance, it would not be possible or reasonable to conduct one hundred interviews with a participant. However, it is not burdensome or particularly unusual to write one hundred letters to a participant over the course of a long study. In my own research, I would not have arrived at the same volume of data through interviewing one participant. However, it is the qualitative features of this data that set it apart from other methods and which I consider subsequently.

Unlike structured or semi-structured interviews, letter writing provides an ongoing opportunity for both participant and researcher to discover and revise what they think as they write. In "Writing – A method of inquiry", Laurel Richardson suggests that it is precisely through the act of writing that we discover something "which we did not know before we wrote it".<sup>33</sup> To conceptualise writing as a method of "discovery and analysis",

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<sup>33</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2005), p. 499.

she suggests, is to deviate from standard social science practices where the act of writing is often viewed as a “mopping up activity at the end of a research project”.<sup>34</sup> Richardson argues that this traditional conception of writing as ‘the final stage’ ignores the “dynamic” and “creative” nature of writing and is inconsistent with the actual experience of research in that it “requires writers to silence their own voices and to view themselves as contaminants”.<sup>35</sup> The idea of writing to find out what we know is in conflict with how we are generally taught, Richardson argues, which is to only begin to write when we know what we are going to say and have points “organised and outlined”.<sup>36</sup> Letter writing provided a means to identify the central tensions, questions and themes within my data that seemed most relevant to pursue. These themes were brought into focus, negotiated and analysed concurrently through the act of writing letters. Unlike other tools such as interviews or questionnaires, letter writing can both precede and run parallel to the ‘writing up’ of the research, continuing to inform data and drive meaning towards precision throughout the research process.

### **The Co-construction of Knowledge**

The social and personal nature of letter writing demands an active participation from the researcher in the co-construction of knowledge. The researcher’s more substantial ‘speaking role’ in the research process as correspondent, challenges the traditional scientific conception of the researcher as a detached observer. Although in an interview context, for example, the researcher may talk freely, interspersing his or her own views and experiences with questions for the participant, the construction of an interview is generally weighted towards the participant responses. A transcript word count, for instance, would in most cases, reveal a far more substantial contribution from the participant than from the researcher. In letter writing, this ‘ratio of contribution’ becomes much more equal. This mutual contribution is necessary to sustain a long correspondence. It does not mean the researcher pads out letters with descriptions of weather and arcane happenings, but works to engage with participant responses in ways that propel the conversation forward. If a participant’s letters were no longer related to the themes of the research and became purely social in nature, the correspondence would be likely to

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 499-501.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 501.

become much more intermittent. It is simply not possible in a research context to sustain a long correspondence that is one-sided in terms of contribution.

As a ‘correspondent’, the researcher is positioned in a non-hierarchical way in relation to the emerging story. This participation requires both the sharing of self, as well as a degree of conceptual transparency about the research design. Such an orientation means the researcher demonstrates a willingness to open up his or her own thinking and interpretations and is prepared to adjust this where it makes sense. The areas of contention and ambiguity that arise out of this process are often the most fertile subjects for deeper analysis, and an openness to exploring these generally leads to a richer understanding for both the researcher and the participant. In my own research this meant that as well as establishing a rapport through correspondence, I also shared my thesis proposal and draft biographical chapters with Richardson. The issues, tensions and questions that arose out of these open exchanges extended my research in unexpected ways and ultimately became the focus of Chapter Eleven of the dissertation.

## Transparency

On an ethical level, Bullough warns that for researchers a lack of transparency about the interpretive schemes they use can cause serious problems:

...Researchers often speak forthrightly of their reliance on social science categories to make sense of a life, although they do not always acknowledge being “heir to a given lineage of conceptualisation”... Too easily and unwittingly, plot protection may masquerade as grounded theory; we invest in and are then blinded by a particular telling, ours or someone else’s we find compelling.<sup>37</sup>

The reflexive nature of letter writing also requires an attitude of what Bullough calls “interpretive humility” on the part of the researcher. By this he means that the researcher has an awareness that “statements of causality are fundamentally fictions” and although some fictions make more compelling reading or are more illuminating than others he says, “no writer ever speaks of truth from a burning bush.”<sup>38</sup> In fact the purpose of such

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Bullough, V., “Musings on Life Writing: Biography and Case Studies in Teacher Education,” in *Writing Educational Biography*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

analysis, Bruner suggests, is “not to reconcile, not to legitimize, not even to excuse, but rather to explicate.”<sup>39</sup>

It does not matter whether the account conforms to what others might say who were witnesses, nor are we in pursuit of such ontologically obscure issues as whether the account is “self-deceptive” or “true.” Our interest, rather is only in what the person thought he did, what he thought he was doing it for, what kinds of plights he thought he was in, and so on.<sup>40</sup>

An attitude of “interpretive humility” and conceptual transparency means that participants are in a position to challenge a researcher’s “commitment to a plot and offer potentially corrective insights while simultaneously causing the researcher to share more fully in the process”.<sup>41</sup> Mishler points out that it is not uncommon for participants to “transform questions asked into those to which they can give meaningful answers”.<sup>42</sup> As a method, the contemplative pace of letter writing seems to facilitate such negotiation. Richardson frequently sought to clarify, revise or modify questions and answers he found ambiguous or irrelevant. In addition, I found that the positions he took and opinions he held in early letters were sometimes discarded entirely over a series of letters. This often occurred with self-deprecating humour, sometimes abruptly, and occasionally with an air of fatigue as if having aired grievances they no longer really mattered any more. Reflecting on his response to a letter in which I had asked him to define his approach, Richardson wrote:

I shouldn’t have thrown a jargon idea into it – ‘discovery approach’ my arse! Straight out of the latest science syllabus – the one that didn’t work!!! You use ‘inquiry approach’ – means the same I suppose?<sup>43</sup>

In his next letter Richardson picked up this theme again and tried again to define his approach that was ‘not a discovery approach’:

...In practice I asked questions...even simple method/choices ones, such as what colour will you make/choose? What will it say to me when I see it finished? Will I be able to understand? I put questions in the minds of [the tamariki] and life in the things of nature like grass, trees, wind, light, dark, smoke... The questions were vital to the processes of watching/listening/interpreting et al. ...So each venture was a new

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<sup>39</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 119.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Bullough, 1998, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Elliot G Mishler, *Storylines: Craftartists’ Narratives of Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> ESR Per. Com., August 27, 2006.

beginning built upon methods and structure understood before and extended into new areas of felt attention.<sup>44</sup>

In this instance, to define Richardson's approach as a 'discovery method' even though he wrote this himself would have been misleading. This would seem to suggest that a body of correspondence needs to be considered narratively in its entirety. Although a similar refinement may occur in a series of interviews, it is unlikely to offer the same scope for the active negotiation and construction of meaning between researcher and participant over a sustained period of time.

In view of this, it is interesting to note that the standard proviso given to participants that they will be given the opportunity to make changes to their interview transcripts, is not considered necessary to extend to those responding via correspondence. There is an underlying assumption that in the writing process the author has already exercised a 'rational censorship' over the content, which has been revised and edited en-route. As data, a letter is assumed to be on much the same level of admissibility as an edited and fully approved transcript. However, this assumption ignores the way the process of letter writing continues to shape the content over the duration of the correspondence. Moreover, the distanced but intimate rapport established through letter writing seems to offer a context for participants to divulge things that they would not feel comfortable saying in person. Richardson commented on this himself observing: "[t]he spoken [word] is not always appropriate. One dwells on accuracy with writing.... I find myself telling you confidences that I never would orally."<sup>45</sup>

The nature of letter writing also means that participants often find themselves thinking and writing in ways that they could not have done previously. Richardson reflected on his experience in our correspondence:

I tore up a little, and begin again when the sun rose again! Then, I'd get it right, never really the final word but a record of the extent at that time of the journey. Later, sometimes, I found myself expounding more fully on perhaps the very same question, but expansively as I could not before...Creative thinking never stands still and one gets more expert at saying what often one no longer needs to write or say! It becomes part of the nature of the person. ...One drives to reach the full explanation

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<sup>44</sup> ESR Per. Com., August 29, 2006.

<sup>45</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 14, 2007.

and I found myself reaching further into other examples and activities, which I had not touched on before!<sup>46</sup>

Several correspondents in Harris' study on self-harm, for example, wrote that the process of reflecting on the past and putting this into words had been helpful for them in achieving resolution.<sup>47</sup> Kralik et al. observed that one of the strengths of this method was the merit of "critical, reflective conversation" as the women in their study "made sense of [their] thoughts and experiences through the reliving and retelling of them".<sup>48</sup> Reflecting on the constructional nature of this process in our personal correspondence Richardson made the following observations:

I've enjoyed the thinking behind the correspondences... I've dug deeper because of it. And I've thought of Oruaiti again in depth about many things which were never before recorded – the river studies for instance<sup>49</sup>

...I found my replies to philosophical debate far more profound than I did when I wrote ITEW [*In the Early World*]; I was, I thought, a not very philosophical philosopher. I now look deeply and intently at situations and make connections! I see things now which I haven't before...One drives to reach the full explanation and I found myself reaching further into other examples and activities which I had not touched on before! Indeed, I am ready to start again with a new Oruaiti!<sup>50</sup>

I have enjoyed (is that the right word) our talks about the past – you made me recall both bad and good memories. ...The remembrance of the story of my educational life at Oruaiti really has been wonderful for me. It has enriched me and given more meaning to much which I had just set aside. It has made me value myself and what happened at Oruaiti so much more. I even laughed at my conclusions! So, it was a good process!<sup>51</sup>

Huberman, suggests that telling the story of one's life is often a vehicle for taking distance from that experience, and, thereby, of making it an object of *reflection*.<sup>52</sup> This decentring, he observes, is a way for teachers to "escape momentarily from the frenzied business of classroom life – from its immediacy, simultaneity, and unpredictability – to explore his or

<sup>46</sup> ESR Per. Com., June 15, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Harris, "The Correspondence Method as a Data-Gathering Technique in Qualitative Enquiry", 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Kralik et al., 2000, p. 911.

<sup>49</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 2, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> ESR Per. Com., June 15, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 14, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Hunter McEwan and Kieran Egan, eds., *Narrative in Teaching, Learning and Research* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995), p. 131.

her life and possibly put it in meaningful order”.<sup>53</sup> Reflection and revision are central features of the correspondence method and not only draw participants’ attention to their own role in the emerging story but also researchers’.

Although these features also hold true for interviews, the factors of distance and delay inherent in correspondence require that such transactions back and forth between letters are made more explicit – each letter picks up where the last one left off and incorporates aspects of the previous conversation. Clandinin and Connelly remark on the way the research process leads the researcher to encounter themselves in the study:

This telling of ourselves, this meeting of ourselves in the past through inquiry, makes clear that as inquirers we, too, are part of the parade. We have helped make the world in which we find ourselves. We are not merely objective inquirers; people on the high road, who study a world lesser in quality than our moral temperament would have it, people who study a world we did not help create. On the contrary, we are complicit in the world we study...as narrative inquirers we work within the space not only with our participants, but also with ourselves.<sup>54</sup>

Bruner also comments on the co-constructive nature of this relationship.

Obviously “the-story-of-a-life” as told to a particular person is in some deep sense a product of the teller and the told. Selves, whatever metaphysical stand one takes about the “reality,” can only be revealed in a transaction between teller and told...whatever topic one approaches by interviewing must be evaluated in the light of that transaction.<sup>55</sup>

Clearly the position the researcher takes on the question of relationship reflects the researcher’s underlying beliefs about the nature of subjectivity and objectivity. Whether these beliefs are made explicit or remain implicit, they nevertheless shape the quality of the data that is generated and influence how this is interpreted, analysed and represented. Toma argues that if we believe that objective researchers can “discover what is real about the world”, then this “necessarily forecloses personal involvement by researchers with research subjects” and requires them to remain “distant and uninvolved in order to generalise about the subjects they explore”.<sup>56</sup> Within this view, getting close to

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Clandinin, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, 2000, p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> Bruner, 1990, p. 125.

<sup>56</sup> Douglas J Toma, “How Getting Close to Your Subjects Makes Qualitative Data Better”, *Theory into Practice* 39, no. 3 (2000), p. 178.



participants “is a mark of biased – thus bad – data”.<sup>57</sup> In contrast, the subjective approach proceeds on the assumption that “personal values necessarily influence any investigation” and “invites involvement” between researchers and participants.<sup>58</sup> It is not possible to have it both ways he states:

The decision is so basic that one cannot be subjective one day and objective the next. The choice reflects a core understanding about how the world works; it is either impossible to be objective or it is not. Someone cannot simply “pretend” to believe the other way for the sake of a particular project, like a lawyer arguing a certain side of a case.<sup>59</sup>

In short, where the researcher stands on the nature of objectivity and subjectivity is where they stand on the question of relationship.

Another question raised by this method for the researcher is just how much of their personal selves to share, particularly when distance invites people to confide things in letters that they would not in person. In her study on self-harm, for example, Harris (2002) found that this dilemma was made even more difficult because her participants were sharing such highly personal, stigmatised and emotional events in their own lives, she writes:

I could not show the ‘professional self,’ replying to their letters in the tone of a faceless bureaucrat, because of the emotional nature of the texts. These texts were full of immense chaotic emotion, but my own existence as an academic is comparatively ordered ...<sup>60</sup>

She addressed this by replying to letters on a “personal level” while trying to avoid being “patronising or judgemental”.<sup>61</sup> The question of at what point ‘professional distance’ becomes ‘self-interest’, is underscored by the fact that in some studies the researcher is actively pursuing lines of questioning that are designed to elicit felt responses. Bullough describes this well:

Ironically case study researchers ask their subjects or informants to open their lives to study when, in fact, we often hesitate to reveal our own thoughts and feelings – our bases of interpretations – to them. We believe we must keep our distance even as we foster a one-sided

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Harris, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

intimacy that tugs at and invites a closer relationship. We hide behind the researcher's role and avoid confronting our "principled selfishness". A loss of humility can easily result, a prideful blindness.<sup>62</sup>

Letherby and Zdrodowski spoke of feeling at times as if they were "holidaying on other people's misery" when they felt pleased to receive a letter or reply, but discovered it detailed distressing experiences.<sup>63</sup> Harris experienced a similar dilemma, commenting that the correspondence relationship was one that invited a closeness, which made detachment a remote proposition:

The content of the letters, as personal and private insights into people's lives, also invited partiality in responses. Descriptions of poor or oppressive health treatment engendered empathetic anger. As the length of the project increased, it became progressively difficult to retain even a semblance of detachment from the data.<sup>64</sup>

Harris also found that navigating the issue of intimacy was perhaps the "most complicated methodological issue to solve in the entire study".<sup>65</sup>

It seems apparent on reflection that many of these dilemmas were engendered by the *medium* of the letter, which is an intensely private and personal document from one individual to another for a specific purpose. Put differently, we are used to writing letters to close friends and confidantes in this type of language – we use an entirely different style for business and other impersonal communication in the public domain. The letters written by the participants were in a personal, confidential style, as though to a friend or relative. The difficulty was that in fact neither situation pertained.<sup>66</sup>

Although as Harris observes participants may not begin as 'friends,' they often end up becoming friends.<sup>67</sup> The tension emerges because the cultivation of friendship is in fact a prerequisite to obtain 'good data.' In Toma's words: "As interactions between researchers and subjects deepen...data about phenomena and people – and the interpretations that result from that data – become better."<sup>68</sup> One of Kralik's participants commented after the study that the researcher "had to be a friend to get us to open up so freely".<sup>69</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>62</sup> Bullough, 1998, p. 27.

<sup>63</sup> Letherby and Zdrodowski, 1995, pp. 583, 587.

<sup>64</sup> Harris, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Wilson 1999; Kralik, 2000.

<sup>68</sup> Toma, 2000, p. 181.

<sup>69</sup> Kralik et al. p. 916.

Kralik et al. state that the researcher made a concerted effort at the outset of the project to “earn the trust of the women” and to keep the correspondence “on a private and personal level...As in a true pen pal relationship, there was an unveiling of ourselves to each other as individuals...Close relationships developed...”<sup>70</sup>

The intimate and collaborative nature of letter writing both sustains and constrains the way the letters and data are used. In Anita Wilson’s study of prison related correspondence, for example, she found that when she came to the writing-up phase she felt uneasy about how she chose to represent the information she had gained from prisoners who had become more than just correspondents:

I found myself becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of discussing what had essentially become a part of the life, not only of the prisoners involved, but also of myself. I realised that while participation in prison letter-writing had provided me with first hand experience of the social process, as an exercise it had transcended its functionality to become a part of my personal and private sphere...Even when I went on to use letter-writing as a method by which to share my developing theories on prison literacies with prisoners, the idea of retaining a purely analytic stance towards such correspondence was a naive dream on my part. It was made very clear by my prison correspondents that I was interacting in a social and personal way with human beings, not merely gathering information by an abstract or detached method of data collection.<sup>71</sup>

Driven to find a suitable way to recount the significance of her correspondence that fitted with her “over-riding ethical concerns regarding exploitation and confidentiality”, Wilson chose to focus on more ‘surface’ features such as ‘visuality in prisoners’ letters’ and the ‘complex variety of literacies’ used by members of the prison community.<sup>72</sup> This decision reflected Wilson’s sense of ethical responsibility in that she felt the quality of data she presented in her chapter was made available to her precisely because she partially relinquished her role as impersonal observer. In the same way, I have chosen to focus on an intellectual and professional biography of Richardson and to avoid some of the more personal topics our correspondence covered.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 914.

<sup>71</sup> Barton and Hall, 1999, p. 180.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp.180-181.

## The Role of Time and Invisibility in Letter Writing

A further consideration related to the use of correspondence is the interplay of time and distance and the issue this raises of ‘invisibility’ or ‘facelessness’. In their research on women’s experience of body image, for example, Zdrodowski and Letherby expressed worry about ‘questioning from a distance’ in relation to personal and emotional issues. They were concerned that where their questions were perceived as insensitive or inappropriate they were not able to respond to non-verbal cues with the same spontaneity as in an interview situation. They cite the experience of Katz Rothman (1986) who gave the following account of a response to a questionnaire she sent to women who had experienced amniocentesis:

The first questions were the woman’s age at the time of her pregnancy, and the age of her baby now. It said in shaky pencil, “dead.” Age of baby – dead. Oh, my god. Oh no. I tore through it. She had had amniocentesis, learned of the baby’s having Down’s Syndrome, and then aborted, and I had sent this idiotic, dreadful, heartless list of questions: Describe foetal movement in the last three months of pregnancy; what month had she started wearing maternity clothes – stupid, stupid questions.<sup>73</sup>

If Rothman had been able to visit the home of the participant, they state, she would have observed that there was no evidence of a baby present.<sup>74</sup> When researching via correspondence the realisation that a participant found a question upsetting if it comes at all, arrives in a subsequent letter after some time has passed. In some instances, this time-delay factor can be advantageous. In her study on self-harm, for example, Harris cites the experience of one of her participants who found ‘time-lag’ useful:

Sometimes I write a letter and it seems too ‘raw’ to send to you straight away. So I put it in the drawer and get it out in a day or two. That’s when I read it again, add anything else I’d forgotten and post it.<sup>75</sup>

Harris found one of the ways she could mitigate her unease at “receiving a letter full of pain and the resultant distress was to consider whether, if we had been face to face, the women would have been able to express her feelings so completely and directly”. She also found that many of her participants commented on the “cathartic effect of writing the

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<sup>73</sup> Rothman, 1986 p. 49; cited in Letherby and Zdrodowski, 1995, pp. 584-585.

<sup>74</sup> Letherby and Zdrodowski, 1995.

<sup>75</sup> Harris, 2002, p. 13.

letters”.<sup>76</sup> Unlike interviewing, researching via correspondence allows time for both the researcher and participant to consider the letter they are responding to as well as the timing of their reply.

In my own experience, for instance, it was several months before I learned that Richardson was troubled by my suggestion that he might have modelled himself on his early mentor, Walford Fowler. It was only after ruminating on this for some months that Richardson raised the issue in a subsequent letter, concluding in the final instance that he agreed with me. In an interview context, it is likely that Richardson would have dismissed my initial comparison (as he did in his first response via letter) and the matter would have rested there. The role that time plays in creating a context for memory, dialogue, reflection and sustained revision is one of the strengths of this method. For the researcher, the constant negotiation and refinement of meaning is labour intensive and can be disconcerting at times in so far as there is often no sense of a ‘final word’ on a topic.

### **Practical Considerations of Letter Writing as a Method**

Logistically, researching by correspondence is generally a more economical method than interviewing, particularly if there are significant distances involved. The transcription of interviews is highly labour intensive with one hour of speech taking roughly four hours to transcribe and the process of crosschecking and editing transcripts with participants adding further time constraints. Obviously the risk of transcription errors is also significantly reduced in correspondence. It is not considered necessary to send letters back to participants to be checked and some researchers may feel that there is no need to have these transcribed either since they are already in a written form.

In their study on chronic illness Kralik et al., had handwritten letters transcribed “for ease of analysis”.<sup>77</sup> Doing this offers some distinct advantages, as the data can then be analysed using qualitative data software to identify central themes and key words. This accessibility makes it possible, for example, to find every reference to a key term such as ‘child art’ in hundreds of pages of letters, with a click of the mouse. In my own research, because my correspondence with Richardson was so voluminous, I had to make a choice between spending significant amounts of time transcribing past letters or in constructing replies to

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>77</sup> Kralik, 2000, p. 916.

his letters. I chose the latter because I felt that transcription was something I would be able to return to after my study, while the opportunity to engage in correspondence with Richardson in his mid-eighties was limited.

To analyse my correspondence with Richardson, I photocopied his letters and collated his alongside mine into yearly volumes with the letters in sequence. For thematic analysis I coded both sets of letters manually identifying key themes, people, dates and events.

### **The Materiality of Letters: An Aesthetic Perspective**

The phrase ‘letter writing as a method of data collection’ or as a ‘source of information’ is less than satisfactory as it suggests a degree of detachment, which is antithetical to the social and familiar nature of communicating by letter. The very materiality of letters makes them much more than ‘a source of information’ and the idiosyncrasy of handwriting, length and frequency of letter, choice of paper, envelopes, ink, stamps, even smell, all speak to the active presence and personality of the participant. This is true even of archived correspondence.

A warmth suffused Richardson’s handwritten letters in their construction as well as their content. His first envelopes addressed me as Mrs Margaret MacDonald, then a little later, unsure of my marital status, Ms. Margaret MacDonald. After a year of corresponding, he made me an envelope with a little ‘lift the flap’ in front of my name. Underneath it said, “Dr” – a quiet encouragement. His letterheads changed over the years of our correspondence as he received his honorary Doctorate from Auckland University and calibrated his professional identity accordingly. His early letters were headed simply, “Elwyn S. Richardson Q.S.O. Palaeontologist and Malacologist.” His later ones are headed “Dr. Elwyn S. Richardson Q.S.O., Dip. Tchg., D Lit. Educationalist, Palaeontologist, Malacologist.”

Our envelopes bear witness to seasons of the year, editions of stamps and particular reams of paper. June and July letters are rain splattered and occasionally muddy. There are blue, cream, brown and white phases of envelopes and paper. Stamps increase from 45 to 50 cents, catching Richardson unaware. One of his letters is undelivered because of insufficient postage, and arrives ten days after it was posted, its temporary incarceration having somehow paid for its arrears. As our correspondence stretches over time

Richardson occasionally jumbles my address, forgetting to add even my street numbers: it is a testimony to the scarcity of handwritten letters that somehow such letters arrive numberless in my letterbox. Thus, there is a haphazardness to corresponding by mail – there are no duplicates and successful delivery remains a tentative proposition.

As well as the letters themselves, envelopes are a canvas for Richardson to express his opinion on political issues such as corporal punishment and warfare. Often the backs of his envelopes contain further notes and comments. One of his rubber stamps on the front of his envelope proclaims, “Complete and Utter Bullshit,” another, “War is not healthy for children and other living things.” There is a faux stamp he often uses, made by a printer friend, featuring David Benson Pope, a NZ cabinet minister and former schoolteacher, whose reputation was besmirched by allegations of student abuse involving a tennis ball. The stamp says “Atrocities des kiwi – David Benson-Pope torture des garcons avec la boule de tennis et corde.”



Figure 3: Envelopes as art – a selection from Richardson, 2005-10

In looking over the volumes of our correspondence, the textural difference between Richardson's letters and my own is striking. The uniform text and even borders of my word-processed letters marshal my words into a precision on the page that jars with our focus on children and creativity. Although they are signed and addressed by hand they seem to straddle the gulf between handwritten and emailed correspondence, floating in some neutered never-land of neither one nor the other.

In his early letters Richardson begins formally, "Dear Margaret," and closes with "Sincerely, Elwyn." As time passes it changes, 'Dear, dear Margaret,' 'Dear Tusitala Margaret', 'Wonderful wishes', 'All the best', 'Bung Ho', 'with love, respect and affection'. I continued signing my letters with the semi-professional 'warmest wishes' and discovered over time that objective detachment was neither possible nor desirable. Writing on the nature of the relationship a biographer establishes with their subject, Stephen Oates suggests that insight alone is not enough to produce a good biography:

Some biographers call for detachment and distance, others for compassion and empathy. I stand with the latter. Empathy is what allows us to call a human being from the darkness; it is the biographer's quintessential quality, his "spark of creation," as Frank Vandiver puts it. Empathy is not the same thing as hero worship. On the contrary, empathy is an attempt to understand frailty and failings in another, not hide from them. It is an effort to experience another human being, by seeing the world from his view, feeling his feelings, and thinking his thoughts.<sup>78</sup>

As a methodological approach, letter writing provides a unique medium through which to understand the world from the viewpoint of another human being.

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<sup>78</sup> Oates, 1990, p.12.



## **Part Two**

### **The Development of Art Education in the New Zealand Primary School 1900-1960**

## **Chapter 3: A Great Stirring of Dry Bones: The Origins of Manual and Technical Education in the New Zealand Primary School**

In this chapter and the subsequent three chapters I trace the transformation of the role of art and craft in the primary school curriculum during the first half of the twentieth century. The series of reforms in manual, technical and art education examined in the following chapters are similar in that they do not tell a story of coherent transitions or reflect an onward and upward march of progress. Instead, they represent a series of reforms precipitated by innovative individuals who, with a dexterous opportunism, seized openings for change and made often minor adjustments that precipitated major innovation in the realm of arts education. Mostly initiated by those ‘working from the centre’, the early reforms provided a context for the growth of arts and crafts education in the 1940s and 1950s when Richardson’s experiment flourished.

I focus in this chapter on some of the administrative reforms initiated by Robert Stout, George Hogben, Arthur Dewhurst Riley, James Shelley and William La Trobe, whose early educational reforms in arts education were to register at Oruaiti School years later. Of these individuals, George Hogben, Inspector-General of Schools from 1899 to 1915, was perhaps the most significant and I give a primary emphasis to his role. However, his efforts built upon the earlier progress of Sir Robert Stout, Prime Minister and Minister of Education from 1885-1887, whose reforms were influenced by the work of Arthur Dewhurst Riley, drawing master and first Director of the Wellington School of Design. The first Manual and Technical Education Act of 1900 that incorporated these reforms was passed with Richard Seddon as Prime Minister from 1893-1906 and Minister of Education from 1903-1906. The combined efforts of all these people resulted in new policies in drawing, manual training and technical education and foreground the significant reforms in art and craft education in the 1940s and 1950s which are discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

In each case, the reform efforts were propelled by potent ideas about curriculum, child development and the role of art in education. When the timing was right, these innovations resulted in policies that led to considerable advances in curriculum and teaching practices in the arts. When the timing was wrong, as in the case of the early versions of the Manual and Technical Educational Act, the reforms became mired in controversy, and had to wait for a change in government to be passed into law. I suggest here that, like Richardson's radical innovations at Oruaiti School, even the best timed of these administrative reforms remained anchored in, and to some degree constrained by, what had come before.

### ***The Manual and Technical Education Act 1900: Stout, Riley and Hogben***

From 1878 New Zealand was divided into 13 distinct geographical regions, which were governed by district education boards. These were Auckland, Taranaki, Wanganui, Hawkes Bay, Wellington, Marlborough, Nelson, Canterbury, Westland, Grey, South Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Each education board was comprised of elected members. Servants of the boards commonly included inspectors, secretaries, clerks, architects. In 1915-16, the inspectors became members/employers of the central Department, and were subject to much more legislation. By 1881, each major district education board had a drawing master who, like Riley, was usually working under the auspices of a particular school or school of art.<sup>1</sup> These early drawing masters were essentially the country's first itinerant art advisors. As well as visiting schools, they provided special classes for teachers in drawing and handwork.<sup>2</sup>

The passing of the Manual and Technical Education Act in 1900 and the subsequent correlation of drawing with manual training marked the beginning of 'art and craft' education as it became known in the middle of the twentieth century. I discuss the origin and development of this particular curricular reform in some detail because it was a milestone in the development of art and craft education in the New Zealand primary school curriculum. The history of this policy also serves to illustrate the uneven nature of curriculum reform and the way in which educational innovation in the realm of arts in

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Tomlin, "Administration of Art Education in New Zealand" (Diploma of Educational Administration, Victoria, 1970), pp. 3, 94.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'handwork' generally applied to the manual subjects that were taught in the primary school such as brush drawing, paper cutting and folding and plasticine modelling, etc.

particular, was impelled by persuasive educational doctrines based on a variety of moral and psychological claims.

Manual training in the primary schools and technical education in the secondary schools developed quite differently. Manual training was, in the jargon of the time, to “train the hand and the eye” while technical education was more clearly vocational. John Nicol’s *Technical Schools of New Zealand* gives an excellent historical account of how technical education was taken up in high schools, technical schools and universities.<sup>3</sup> My focus here will remain on the development of manual training within the primary school system, and in particular in its relation to the development of drawing and handcraft – the precursors of art and craft education.

The first legislation concerning technical education was the Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act of 1895, which added manual instruction to the general primary school course of subjects and brought technical schools under the control of Education Boards. This act had its roots in the vision of Premier Robert Stout, who viewed the secondary course, which was dominated by academic subjects such as Latin, French and mathematics, as “largely irrelevant to colonial life”.<sup>4</sup> In his view the schools were “little more than class schools” and were for the most part “reproducing a syllabus which had already begun to change in other countries”.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, he envisaged manual and technical education as a social reform which would extend the relevancy of the school programme beyond the narrow interests of the upper classes to all of society.

Inspired by advances in technical education in England, Stout wrote to all of the Boards of Governors making a case for the “great importance of including in the programme of the secondary schools as much instruction as possible in subjects that have a direct bearing upon the technical arts of modern life”.<sup>6</sup> Stout pointed out that the endowments and public aid given to high schools and grammar schools were so that they could provide to “all classes, not to the professional classes only”, a course of study that would adequately

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<sup>3</sup> J Nicol, *The Technical Schools of New Zealand: An Historical Survey* (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1940).

<sup>4</sup> Noel Harrison, *The School That Riley Built: The Story of the Wellington Technical College from 1886 to the Present Day* (Wellington: Wellington Technical College, 1961), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1885, p. 117.

prepare them for more direct and immediate training for special careers.<sup>7</sup> In addition, he warned:

The professions are likely to become overcrowded unless something is done to create a bias towards industries, and our manufacturing industries will not be followed by our brighter and more intelligent youths if they are merely drilled in the ordinary subjects of a grammar school education.<sup>8</sup>

Other countries he argued, were in advance of New Zealand and in their schools:

...Increasing attention is being paid to geometrical and mechanical drawing and the handling of tools, as useful subjects of instruction. The schools of this Colony might do good service by taking up these subjects as well as physics and chemistry...if the secondary schools have become in any respect unpopular in any parts of the Colony, it may be because the people have not seen direct practical results flow from them. Were attention paid to technical education as well as to ordinary studies in secondary schools, the objections now urged against the endowing of high and grammar schools would probably not be heard...<sup>9</sup>

Nicol observes that Stout was the first Minister of Education who believed that a national policy of technical education was important for the country's development and who was willing to promote this "even in disregard of political expediency".<sup>10</sup> It is highly likely that Stout would also have been aware of the efforts of Professor A. W. Bickerton of Canterbury College who four years earlier had also appealed to Habens (the Inspector-General of Schools) to adopt a system of industrial education based upon the English model. Bickerton had been instrumental in organising a committee of the Industrial Association to consider how to advance technical education and he presented the resulting report to the Minister of Education in June 1881.<sup>11</sup>

The report included recommendations for a government funded, national programme of evening classes which would be administered by District School Committees and Education Boards and would include such subjects as: "Freehand drawing, practical geometry, linear perspective, principles of design, drawing for carpenters, builders and machinists, theoretical and practical mechanics, physics, chemistry, biology, and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1885, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> Nicol, *The Technical Schools of New Zealand: An Historical Survey*, 1940, p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Nicol, p. 19.

geology”.<sup>12</sup> The report suggested employing instructors from the staffs of existing schools, colleges, and industry, and using their school facilities and buildings.<sup>13</sup> Nicol observes that although Bickerton was not the sole propagator of these ideas, “He was a principal agent in building up the body of public opinion favourable to technical education which in spite of set-backs became strong enough during the next decade to compel action on a national scale by the Government.”<sup>14</sup>

Stout’s appeal for technical instruction, however, was largely ignored and apart from a few scattered attempts at including subjects such as drawing or woodwork, most schools continued as before.<sup>15</sup> Following this attempt, Stout appealed to the University Colleges suggesting that they institute evening technical education classes and employ the graduates as instructors in technical education.<sup>16</sup> This suggestion received a similarly unenthusiastic response and in the face of this resistance to change from secondary schools and universities, as well as the difficulty of securing funding from parliament, it became clear that the only way forward was to work through the existing institutions and gradually break down their prejudices.<sup>17</sup>

Frustrated by his inability to advance the development of technical education on a broad front, in a strategic administrative manoeuvre, Stout made drawing, which he viewed as the precursor of technical education, a compulsory subject in the primary syllabus. With this inclusion, drawing became both the first and only manual or technical subject to be taught in isolation with a position equal to such heavy weight basic subjects as reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic.

This inclusion, writes Butchers, “resulted in a great stirring of the dry bones as hundreds of teachers who had never before attempted to make the crudest drawing were suddenly required to teach the subject”.<sup>18</sup> This led to an almost instant demand for professional drawing instructors (of which there was a shortage) and the development of schools of art

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1885, p. 177.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Nicol, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> A. G. Butchers, *Education in New Zealand: An Historical Survey of Educational Progress Amongst the Europeans and the Maoris since 1878: Forming with ‘Young New Zealand’ a Complete History of Education in New Zealand from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (Dunedin: Coulls Somerville Wilkie, 1930), p. 105.

in the major cities.<sup>19</sup> Stout followed this amendment with the provision for a School of Design in Wellington and in 1884 the Wellington Education Board appointed Arthur Dewhurst Riley, a lecturer from the Sydney School of Art, as the first drawing master.<sup>20</sup> Riley's brief was to draft a complete drawing scheme for all age levels in the primary school, to supervise the teaching of drawing in all of the Board's primary schools as well as to provide training to the Board's teachers so that they could implement the syllabus.<sup>21</sup>

### Riley's Role

Before accepting the position of drawing master, Riley negotiated the significant proviso that should he win the job he be allowed to begin special technical classes of instruction for young adults in addition to the work advertised. It was from this inclusion, which the Board agreed to, that the Wellington School of Design later known as the Wellington Technical College began.<sup>22</sup> An artist himself, Riley trained at the South Kensington Art School in London. Established in 1851, the South Kensington School was a public institution, established to provide British artisans with vocational training in art, design and industrial applications. The fact that it was a government school with an emphasis on industrial design gave the school a populist appeal setting it apart from schools such as the Slade School of Art, where the emphasis was on 'high art' as opposed to 'applied' or 'industrial' art and design.<sup>23</sup>

Riley's orientation to applied art was strongly influenced by the ideas of British writer, designer and socialist William Morris and like Morris he believed in an intimate relation between art and daily life. His own interests were in the newly developing field of industrial design and his conviction of the "life-blood relationship between art and industry" was manifested in the strong links he forged between the School of Design (later

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Harrison, 1961, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> The Centennial Committee of the Wellington Technical College, *From Riley to Royal: The School of Design, Wellington Technical College, Wellington High School, 1886-1986* (Wellington: The Centennial Committee of the Wellington Technical College, 1986), p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> See Kali Israel, *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 55: When Edward Poynter became principal of the Slade School of Art in 1871, he emphasised that the school would provide an official setting for the study of 'high art' as distinguished from 'ornamental design' classes fostered by the government schools. In this regard, the Slade School offered a refuge from contact with working-class and lower-middle-class students. Nunn writes that Poynter unapologetically prioritised which he called 'high art' and combined academic criteria with more modern ideals than were found at the RA which was "enlivened by a degree of Ruskinian appreciation of the animating spirit which an artist must evidence in the face of nature" Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists* (London: Women's Press, 1987), pp. 54-55.

known as the Wellington Technical School) and local industry.<sup>24</sup> Over the next five years he enlisted the help of master tradesmen to form a system of advisory committees for the various subjects and affiliated the school with the City and Guilds Institute in London and the South Kensington Art School to enable local tradesmen to gain internationally recognised qualifications. As Beeby would in the 1950s, Riley worked to develop links between the school and the wider community and viewed this relationship as a dynamic one in which the school would adjust courses and methods according to need.<sup>25</sup>

As drawing master for the Wellington Education Board, Riley was responsible for developing a syllabus based on the 1885 amendment, which would specify exactly the work recommended for each of the standards in the branches of drawing – freehand, scale, geometry and object. The Wellington inspectors were impressed with the progress Riley made and noted considerable improvement in these three branches of drawing. The rapid increase in certificates issued to pupil-teachers in first-grade drawing demonstrates the effect of Riley’s input. For example, certificates issued in first grade drawing in the year preceding Riley’s appointment in 1884, number 81, while in the year following his appointment a total of 233 certificates were issued, more than doubling again the following year to 516.<sup>26</sup>

## **A Second Attempt**

Stout left office in 1887 without any further development of his broader proposals for the advance of technical education. In 1892 William Pember Reeves, the first Minister of Labour in the New Zealand Cabinet, brought forward a new bill, which “proposed to subsidise manual training classes held outside of normal hours in public schools and to authorise education boards, committees, societies or instructors to conduct technical classes under stipulated conditions and receive capitation for them”.<sup>27</sup> Reeves’ bill met the same fate as three previous attempts in 1889, 1890 and 1893, by Geo Fisher, a former Minister of Education, to introduce a private measure dealing with technical education, and received a generally indifferent response.<sup>28</sup> In spite of this, the push for education

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<sup>24</sup> The Centennial Committee of the Wellington Technical College, *From Riley to Royal: The School of Design, Wellington Technical College, Wellington High School, 1886-1986*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1892, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Nicol, 1940, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



board control of technical schools continued and led in 1895 to the summoning of a conference of education boards to reconsider the issue of technical education. This resulted in renewed pressure on Reeves to revive and pass the bill into law.<sup>29</sup> Reeves reintroduced the bill, which was again opposed on many of the same grounds – that the expenditure was excessive, that it would divert attention from the core subjects and burden an already overcrowded syllabus, that it would benefit the leisured class at the expense of the general public, and that the money would be better used to help country schools.<sup>30</sup> In response to these criticisms Reeves made an amendment limiting the total amount that could be granted within one year to £2000, and the bill became the Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act of 1895.

The Act, however, had flaws that made it largely unworkable and led it to being mostly abandoned and then modified in 1897. In brief, the first draft failed to provide for the establishment of buildings, and the capitation system for determining the appropriate amount of financial aid based on attendance was not workable and quickly broke down.<sup>31</sup> Although some of these concerns were addressed in the modifications that followed the second reading of the bill, a new proviso inserted to prevent the subsidizing of religious schools meant that the bill became embroiled in religious debate and it was eventually abandoned by Seddon who had no choice but to wait until the next general election to try to modify the 1895 Act.<sup>32</sup>

### **Hogben's Influence**

Seddon's next attempt to introduce manual and technical education into the primary school syllabus coincided with the beginning of George Hogben's term as Inspector General in 1899. During the fifteen years he was Inspector-General of Schools (a position that became Director of Education in 1915) Hogben rewrote the primary school syllabus entirely and instigated a raft of reforms which reshaped the education system in New Zealand. His reorganization disrupted what was a fairly arid and formalist curriculum improving not only the range of subjects included in the curriculum but also the system that administered public education. He viewed the establishment of manual training not so much as the introduction of a series of new subjects, but as a practical reform which would

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-52.

require a fundamental change in teaching methods. The new subjects would lead to a more ‘organic connection’ between the various subjects themselves and encourage more practical, ‘concrete’ and varied teaching methods. Although his detractors dismissed him as a ‘faddist’ and an interventionist, and criticised his individual blend of liberal and conservative ideologies, he is widely considered along with Beeby, as one of the most influential Directors of Education in New Zealand education. Hogben shared Stout’s desire to correlate school work with everyday life and played a critical role in the promotion and passing of the Manual and Technical Education Act of 1900.

Hogben arrived in New Zealand in 1881 at the age of 27 to accept a position as ‘second Master’ at Christchurch Boys’ High School which had been advertised in *The Times*, London. After six years of teaching science and mathematics in this job he accepted a position with the North Canterbury Education Board in 1887 as an Inspector of Schools, a position he held for two years. During this period, Hogben also became active in the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), becoming president in 1886-87. His presidency gave him a platform to express his views on the deficiencies of the national system and foreshadowed many of the reforms he would introduce during his time as Inspector-General of Education.<sup>33</sup> His criticisms included condemnation of the current ‘pass system,’ which dominated teaching and meant that teachers were not able to grade their own students. He maintained that “too much attention was given to cramming facts instead of developing the general intelligence of children” and he made a case for greater flexibility in deciding the age at which children could enter secondary school based on their ability.<sup>34</sup> In addition, he advocated the centralisation of the inspectorate, an effective but simpler system of local control in educational matters, systematic moral instruction, free tuition for deserving pupils from the kindergarten to the university, a colonial scale of teachers’ salaries, and a full measure of technical instruction.<sup>35</sup>

Following his two years as an inspector for the North Canterbury Education Board, Hogben became rector of Timaru High School in May 1889, where he was to stay for ten years until his appointment as Inspector-General. Hogben firmly believed that good teaching required practical engagement from students and that the methods should be as

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<sup>33</sup> One year before the end of Hogben’s term, which lasted from 1899-1915, the title of this position changed from Inspector-General to the Director of Education, effective from 1915.

<sup>34</sup> Herbert O. Roth, *George Hogben: A Biography* (Wellington: NZCER, 1952), p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

closely related to the environment as possible. In his view, the excessive focus on examination and testing concerned only “some powers of the mind and neglected others of the highest importance” and caused learning to become “detached from the facts of life and the true nature of the child.”<sup>36</sup> At Timaru High School, Hogben was given considerable freedom by the Board to re-organise the school and the curriculum, and he introduced new subjects such as German, botany, class singing, shorthand, the use of tools, swimming and sloyd (a Swedish term for handcraft), as well as more practical ‘concrete’ methods of teaching.<sup>37</sup> He outlined his approach in his report to the Board of 1894:

In all the science classes the work is practical, experiments and measurements being made by the pupils themselves. Simple surveying and drawing to scale are made the foundation of map-drawing; pupils are taught to take the altitude of the sun at different seasons and the latitude (roughly); and models and pictures are largely used in teaching other parts of geography. The Sloyd and carpentry work serve not only their special purposes, but are connected with the lessons on geometry and drawing. Again, in one of the bookkeeping classes, the boys are divided into firms trading with one another and keep accounts of all transactions. It is found not only that the treatment of each subject is more natural, and the interest is more easily sustained, but also that it is easier to make a real co-ordination between the several subjects of the school curriculum.<sup>38</sup>

Hogben’s methods won praise from the Inspector-General of Schools, the Rev. W. J. Habens who noted in his 1894 report, “I mention with special approval the use made of workshop as a part of the Timaru High School, where the pupils make their own scientific apparatus, and the illustration of their school studies; and I take this opportunity of expressing my high sense of the value of studies that can be illustrated in this way.”<sup>39</sup> Butchers maintains that had all secondary schools responded to the opportunity provided to them by Stout to organise the practical and technical side of their work the establishment of technical high schools would not have been necessary.<sup>40</sup>

After Habens’ sudden death at the age of 59 in February, 1899, Hogben was offered the position of Inspector-General by Seddon and assumed this in April. Hogben became

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<sup>36</sup> *AJHR*, E-1c, 1904, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Roth, 1952, p. 62.

<sup>38</sup> *AJHR*, E-9, 1894, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Butchers, 1930, p. 201.

Inspector-General at a time when people were ready for change and he was able to progress a number of educational reforms which had earlier foundered because of severe retrenchment in government spending.

It was widely accepted at this time that the general syllabus was due for revision, and Hogben had already presented his recommendations for comprehensive reorganisation in his capacity as president of NZEI and as an Inspector of Schools in North Canterbury Board as early as 1887.<sup>41</sup> Once he was Inspector-General, however, he was able to guide through these reforms and to advance the closer relation between the general course subjects and practical methods of instruction he had trialled during his decade at Timaru High School. In his first annual report to the Department of Education in 1899 he made a case for the inclusion of manual training as a part of the ordinary school course:

One of the healthiest effects of manual training and a sufficient justification for its introduction in a scheme of general education is that it trains the judgement to deal with practical life; it thus fosters the constructive instinct, and counteracts the tendency of a too exclusively bookish school system towards sedentary occupations and town life.<sup>42</sup>

In July, 1899, three months after Hogben's appointment, there arose an opportunity for a review of the syllabus in the form of an educational conference organised by the Wanganui Education Board. The conference, which Hogben attended by invitation, brought together Board members, Inspectors and representatives of the NZEI. Ewing points out that this was the first general conference ever held on education in New Zealand, and he describes the items on the agenda, which had been prepared by the Wanganui Board, as typical of the "piece-meal patching that had characterised previous syllabus revisions".<sup>43</sup>

Hogben's report on the conference states that there was a "very pronounced opinion" from education boards, school committees and inspectors of schools, in favour of modifying the regulations, but that it was generally thought best to leave reconsideration of the syllabus until after the conference of inspectors which was proposed for January 1901.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *AJHR*, I-8, 1887, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1899, pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>43</sup> John L. Ewing, *The Development of the New Zealand Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970* (Wellington: NZCER, 1970), p. 94.

<sup>44</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1900, p. ix.

## The New Act

The flawed Manual and Technical Instruction Act of 1895 was replaced by a new Act in 1900, which encompassed a broader definition of manual and technical education.<sup>45</sup> This was due in a large part to the work of Riley, who in 1898 had taken six months leave to study technical education in England. Riley's comprehensive 100-page report replete with photographs was presented to the Wellington Education Board. Most of Riley's suggestions were accepted by Hogben and incorporated into the 1900 Act.<sup>46</sup> The adoption of these measures, says Nicol, was a great advance on Seddon's bill of 1897: "One may say that Riley laid the foundations and determined the material needed for the superstructure, while Hogben approved of his work and carried the plan into execution,"<sup>47</sup> and each of these pioneers, he contends, is "entitled to credit as an inaugurator of the new era of manual and technical education in New Zealand, and each was fortunate in having the goodwill and co-operation of the other".<sup>48</sup> The efforts of Bickerton should be added to these two, for although his recommendations to Habens in 1881 were not accepted his efforts were instrumental in raising the profile of technical education and garnering favourable public support.

Under the new Act manual education was defined as including: "such exercises as shall train the hand in conjunction with the eye and brain" as well as "kindergarten employments, exercises in continuation thereof, modelling in any material and generally practice in the use of tools". Technical education had a broader definition still and was defined as:

...Instruction in the principles of any specified science or art as applied to industries, accompanied by individual laboratory or workshop practice, or instruction in modern languages, or in such other subjects connected with industrial, commercial, agricultural or domestic pursuits as are prescribed by the act.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> This included a wider range of activities from kindergarten work to subjects such as dairy work, swimming and gardening. Ewing, 1970, p. 100.

<sup>46</sup> Nicol, *The Technical Schools of New Zealand: An Historical Survey*, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

In addition to the establishment of technical schools, the act made provision for continuity in manual and technical education across the education system from kindergarten to university.<sup>50</sup>

Still constrained by the limitations of the previous syllabus, and the temporary and ‘patching’ nature of the 1899 revisions, Hogben emphasised the ‘new spirit’ of the syllabus reforms by supplying rationales for individual subjects, which supported a more real connection with everyday life. The prescriptions for drawing, for instance, mention for the first time a list of ‘advantages’ of the subject which stress its “unlimited applications to the concerns of daily life – even to dressmaking and cooking” as well as having an even more direct bearing on the work of the skilled artisan. In science, practical experiments suited to the “present stage of development” are encouraged to “enlarge children’s conception of the world”, “quicken intelligence” and arouse a “profitable curiosity”.<sup>51</sup> Under this scheme manual subjects were to be taught by ordinary class teachers who would receive specialist training – a system that was already proving successful in relation to the supervision of drawing because of Stout’s 1885 provisions. To fund this, a specialist training grant of £1875 was given to each education board in 1901 to provide training for teachers in the new manual subjects.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, in 1901, Hogben appointed the first specialists to oversee the new manual education. M. H. Browne, the science master of Timaru High School and E.C. Isaac, a Congregationalist clergyman were made ‘organising technical inspectors’.<sup>53</sup> They joined the ranks of the drawing masters such as Riley who were already working in schools and in teacher training, and whose brief had gradually expanded to include the teaching of the new manual subjects. At the Wellington School of Design for example, where Saturday morning classes had been held for teachers in the various branches of drawing for some years, new subjects of singing, cooking, cardboard work, brushwork, wood and clay work were introduced.

Under Hogben’s revised primary school syllabus, more liberal capitation grants were provided for manual classes, which covered:

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>51</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1899, p. xvii-xviii.

<sup>52</sup> *AJHR*, E-5, 1899, p. xviii.

<sup>53</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1902, p.104.

‘Kindergarten’ work such as clay modelling, bricklaying, stick-laying, drawing in chalk or charcoal, mat-weaving, peaswork, paper folding and mounting, plasticine modelling; for older children, brush drawing, woodwork, cardboard modelling, free-arm and blackboard drawing, design and colour work, cottage gardening, swimming, elementary agriculture, geometrical drawing and cookery.<sup>54</sup>

To deflect criticism about overcrowding the curriculum with these new subjects, permission was given under the Act in 1902, for school classes to continue after school hours so that time was not taken away from the ordinary subjects in the core curriculum.<sup>55</sup>

### ***Educational Doctrines in Early Manual Education: Mental Muscles, Social Efficiency and Developmentalist Orientations***

Hogben drew primarily on three different educational doctrines in the promotion of drawing and manual education in the primary school. These rationales were not mutually exclusive and often overlapped in certain areas while pointing in different directions. Kliebard describes the ideological concomitance frequently found in curriculum reform:

...At any given time we do not find a monolithic supremacy exercised by one interest group; rather we find different interest groups competing for dominance over the curriculum and, at different times, achieving some measure of control depending on local as well as general social conditions. Each of these interest groups represents a force for a different selection of knowledge and values from the culture and hence a kind of lobby for different curriculum.<sup>56</sup>

The mental discipline, social efficiency and developmentalist rationales used by Hogben and his officials to promote manual and technical education reveal the way beliefs about the aims and purposes of school, the role of the teacher and the nature of the child were shaped by different social and intellectual currents. The mental discipline rationale, for example, was based on a theory of mind that viewed the brain as a muscle which could be strengthened through strenuous activity. In contrast, the social efficiency rationale for manual education was underscored by the belief that education was preparation for work. Within the developmentalist rationale used to promote manual education, the purpose was not to prepare students for future occupations, but to develop the individuality of each

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<sup>54</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1904, p. 81.

<sup>55</sup> *AJHR*, E-5, 1903, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Herbert Kliebard, M., *The Struggle for the American Curriculum: 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 17.

child based on careful study of their nature and needs. These doctrines foreshadow the rationales provided by educational officials in the 1940s and 1950s for learning through the arts which are discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

To examine these, I draw primarily on the education reports in the *Appendices of the Journal of the House of Representatives (AJHR)* from 1900 to 1915. As a primary source, the AJHR reports provide an excellent record of officials' perceptions of the newly emerging field of manual education. The reports of the chief inspectors contain references to the work of international educationalists whose ideas were being taken up with enthusiasm overseas, extol the virtues of teaching methods that reflect these new educational doctrines and criticise administrative practices and school conditions which were viewed as running counter to these new pedagogical ideas.

The purpose of the AJHR reports was to advise education boards on the performance and condition of the schools under their jurisdiction, in particular to report on examination results, school environment and teaching practices.<sup>57</sup> Beeby explained the structure of the AJHR reports as follows:

The first section of the report, (E.1.), was an extensive report by the Inspector General of Education covering the administration in the year to date.<sup>58</sup> This section was written by officers of the Department and signed by the minister and represented the 'official voice' of the Department. The second section of the report, E.2, contained the reports of the individual Chief Inspectors who were allowed a remarkable degree of freedom to express their own opinions, criticisms and to advocate for their own divisions. In this sense E.2. did not speak for the Department and represented divergent views, which in many instances came close to running counter to government policies.<sup>59</sup>

Inspector's reports are therefore an excellent representation of the administrative temper of the times relative to the newly emerging field of manual and handwork education.

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<sup>57</sup> Ewing, 1970, p. 30.

<sup>58</sup> The principal educational administrators were the Minister of Education, followed by the Inspector General of Schools. The Director of Education had an Assistant Director of Education who in turn had a Secretary to the Department of Education. These administrators were joined by a Chief Inspector of Primary Schools, a Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools and a Superintendent of Technical Education.

<sup>59</sup> Beeby, C. E. to David McKenzie, Per. Com., October 13, 1985, (NZ MS 485-3).



## The Mental Muscles Rationale

By the turn of the century, the doctrine of ‘mental discipline’ also known as ‘faculty psychology’ or ‘formal discipline’, that had characterised much of the 1800s was increasingly being regarded as a mind-warping approach. This conception of mind, known by critics as the ‘mental muscles’ theory, was built on by mental disciplinarians, Kliebard says, who argued that the mind just like the body could be strengthened “through properly conceived gymnastics.”<sup>60</sup> Because manual education encompassed such a broad range of activities and emphasised ‘practical work’, it was an ideal subject to promote in faculty psychology terms. The Taranaki Inspectors, for example, state:

A pupil who during his school course has had his faculties so trained will become a better man, and a more useful being on the veldt, on the farm, in the office or in the workshop, even if after he leaves school he may never drive a nail, handle a saw or see a piece of plasticine.<sup>61</sup>

Manual education was viewed by some school inspectors as offering the best and possibly only method of training the faculties and muscles of the mind for certain children:

To neglect a type of training by which the direct effect is to increase the efficiency of specialised groups of muscles, and of the brain and sense organs in connection with them, is to seriously mutilate our education; and it is the more serious in the case of the many children whose faculties for work, discipline, and constructive mental effort can best, or only, be developed in this way. What is greatly needed is a closer co-ordination between the work of the manual training centre and the work of the school.<sup>62</sup>

The theory of mental discipline that came to prominence in the 1800s, stemmed from the work of Christian Wolff, a German psychologist, (1740) who developed a “detailed hierarchy of faculties”, which were believed to make up the human mind.<sup>63</sup> In his history of schools and socialisation in New Zealand McGeorge explains that although there was no general agreement on the number of faculties a human mind possessed they could be divided into three general sorts:

Faculties of mind in the stricter sense: memory, observation, judgement, analysis, synthesis etc. Secondly there were the intellectual virtues: care,

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<sup>60</sup> Kliebard, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1903, p.11.

<sup>62</sup> *AJHR*, E-5, 1912, p. 65.

<sup>63</sup> Kliebard, 1986, pp. 4-5.

precision, attention to detail and to evidence. Thirdly, there were the conventional moral and social virtues: honesty, diligence, obedience, punctuality, truthfulness, loyalty, sympathy etc.<sup>64</sup>

The doctrine of formal discipline was useful in its place, McGeorge maintains: “It provided a ready answer to charges that schools dealt in dated or irrelevant material, it sustained traditional content and methods, and it justified dealing with practical subjects in a schoolmasterly way.”<sup>65</sup> The claim of faculty psychology was that a faculty might be developed through one subject or activity and the strengthened faculty would enable easier mastery of a new subject. It was widely used by educators to justify the existence of certain obsolete subjects such as Latin, as well as to validate stultifying methods of teaching. McGeorge writes:

Long after Latin ceased to be a living language, and long after it ceased to be a standard means of communication between the learned, it was held to provide an unparalleled means of improving the memory and pupils’ powers of analysis and classification, powers they would then be able to apply to any situation or problem.<sup>66</sup>

In fact, it was this notion of transference, which made the theory most vulnerable to attack and ultimately led to it losing favour. School inspectors wrote rather vaguely of “applying the manual principle” to the “illustration and enforcement of lessons in other subjects”.<sup>67</sup> The problem with this argument, however, was that if the mind was comprised of a group of muscles which could be strengthened through repetitive exercises, it was reasoned, why could it not be strengthened for example, through the chanting of soup labels, or nonsense jingles?<sup>68</sup> Bode observed the problem of transfer was that:

Mechanical habits, i.e. responses cultivated in isolation, do not seem to facilitate transfer, but may even provide obstacles to transfer. If the habits of an automobile driver are once thoroughly mechanised, the change to a different type of gearshift is likely to be attended to with some difficulty.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Colin McGeorge, “Schools and Socialisation in New Zealand 1890-1914” (PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 1985), pp. 210-11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>67</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1902, p. 49.

<sup>68</sup> McGeorge, 1985, p. 214.

<sup>69</sup> Boyd H. Bode, *Modern Educational Theories* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 202.

Transfer, he argued, takes place through flexibility and adaptability in concepts and meanings, and is in this sense, just another name for intelligence. “If we can bring the school into right relations with the life outside of school, the problem of transfer will take care of itself.”<sup>70</sup> McGeorge observes that even if many teachers were ignorant of the psychological and educational theories behind faculty psychology they were still exposed and to some degree affected by the doctrine:

It was, for one thing, a plausible, common-sensical notion and much in the mouths of the inspectors, speakers on education and leader-writers. It was also the one psychological theory clearly embodied in the practical texts on school method, which many teachers did read, if only to cram for their certificates. And it was clearly in the minds of those who constructed the syllabus regulations to which practical teachers paid such minute attention.<sup>71</sup>

This particular educational doctrine, Kliebard states, provided the justification for a regime of “monotonous drill, harsh discipline and mindless verbatim recitation”.<sup>72</sup> At this time, the pseudo-scientific notion of ‘transfer,’ which generally formed part of this theory, was coming under attack from a range of educationalists. One of the most lucid critiques of this notion was to be found in Thorndike’s 1906 *Elements of Psychology*.

It is extremely unsafe to teach anything simply because of its supposed strengthening of attention or memory or reasoning ability or any other mental power; when a teacher can give no other reason for a certain lesson or method of teaching than its value as discipline, the lesson or method should be changed.<sup>73</sup>

The eventual collapse of this orientation to curriculum, according to Kliebard, was a result of the “changing social order which brought with it a different conception of what knowledge is of most worth”.<sup>74</sup> Unlike the social efficiency doctrine, there was no key idea within the mental discipline doctrine that continued to reverberate throughout twentieth century educational thought with the same power and influence as the notion of schooling as ‘preparation for the workforce’, which is discussed next.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>71</sup> McGeorge, 1985, pp. 213-214.

<sup>72</sup> Kliebard, 1986, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Edward L Thorndike, *The Elements of Psychology* (New York: A G Seiler, 1906), pp. 242-243.

<sup>74</sup> Kliebard, 1986, p. 7.

## **A Better Class of Boy: The Social Efficiency Rationale**

Manual and handwork education, (which included drawing), was widely promoted by education officials at the turn of the century as both an economic and a political necessity. The process of colonisation in New Zealand was one that brought together both industry and agriculture and the idea of schools assuming the responsibility for preparing children to be future engineers, draughtsmen, industrialists and farmers had significant appeal. It was considered by many to be a logical role for schools to take on, and one that was vital for the development of the new colony. The doctrine of social efficiency emphasised the importance of industrial capability and an economic rationale could easily be found for every subject. For example, gardening laid the foundations for farm work, drawing for design, and if there was any doubt as to the specificity of ‘skill transfer’ to workforce occupations, then the virtue of ‘personal efficiency’ could always be invoked by inspectors:

It should be premised that in the primary-school course there is neither specialization nor anything in the shape of vocational work. Handwork at this stage and for the most part at the secondary stage also, is merely a member of the copartnery of school subjects leading up to right thinking, right feeling, right willing, and right acting, that tend to produce capacity and character...What is the justification of it all? ...Here it must be justified on the ground that it contributes to the well being of the State by facilitating the production and exchange of wealth ...the domestic arts classes contribute to personal efficiency; and classes in the various branches of agriculture stimulate the direct production of wealth.<sup>75</sup>

When Hogben made a case for the inclusion of manual education in his address at the 1904 conference of inspectors of schools and teachers’ representatives, he deftly linked manual education and scientific knowledge with industrial supremacy:

We all want the hand and eye developed in connection with the brain of the pupils, and we want them developed in such a way that the pupils are made ready for the pursuits they will be engaged in afterwards, especially those that belong to their own particular districts; and that fact will determine the science-teaching and the handwork in our primary schools. But children of tender years in our primary schools are hardly in a position to receive what in the real sense is called “technical education”...But it is our business to make ready for their technical education at a later stage by a suitable scheme of manual

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<sup>75</sup> *AJHR*, E-5, 1914, p. 36.

instruction...We can give the child the beginnings of scientific method in the primary school. In fact, the child begins it himself – the spontaneous exercise of his own activities and powers, his own curiosity and his own desire to observe are the beginning of it, and we have to direct these in such a way that he really begins to acquire what may truly – though in a very humble way – be called the beginning of the scientific method. I think we should keep that aim before us, in order not only to develop the mind of the individual child, but also to lay the foundation of that scientific knowledge that will enable the citizens of the empire to maintain the supremacy that their own genius and industry, and perhaps their natural advantages, have given them in the past.<sup>76</sup>

When the social efficiency doctrine was used as a rationale to prepare individuals for future occupations, the justification, in Dewey's view, "defeats its own purpose" and becomes nothing more than a rationale for the perpetuation of the inequality of the status quo.<sup>77</sup> The idea of education as 'preparation' for the workforce is one of the most enduring ideas of this doctrine and remains embedded in ideas about schooling today.<sup>78</sup> New Zealand education officials, for example, placed a particular emphasis on retaining country students for future work in their own districts:

By handwork the pupil may be drawn towards employments requiring the use of the hand. If the inclination for handwork is roused, a sympathy will be felt for those pursuits that require a use of the hand, and a better class of boy may be retained for the country instead of drifting into the town. As the farming industry is the backbone of a country's wealth, the educationalist cannot neglect this aspect.<sup>79</sup>

In its most positive sense, the social efficiency doctrine reflected the belief that the skill of being able to support oneself economically was as vitally important as the more classical aims of education. Dewey regarded the social efficiency doctrine as "adequate" if the realisation of this was attained through the voluntary use of individual abilities and natural aptitudes in work that had social meaning.<sup>80</sup> As an educational doctrine it was modern in that 'preparation for work' was seen as a departure from 'bookish' learning and involved more active participation of the child, as well as bringing about a more real connection between school and life. School inspectors, for example, commented that the "newer

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., E-1C 1904, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1921), p. 415.

<sup>78</sup> Herbert Kliebard, M., "The Rise of Scientific Curriculum Making and Its Aftermath," *Curriculum Theory Network* 5, no. No.1 (1975): p. 29.

<sup>79</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1906, p. 36.

<sup>80</sup> Dewey, 1921, pp. 54-56.

education adds ‘do’ to ‘see’, and brings in the hand on every possible occasion to aid the eye, and thus assimilates the education of the school room to the education of life.”<sup>81</sup>

However, Dewey, in *My Pedagogic Creed*, took pains to define education as “a process of living and not a preparation for future living”.<sup>82</sup> In *Democracy and Education* he argues that to think of children as merely getting ready for a remote and obscure world is to remove them as social members of the community. “They are looked upon as candidates”, he said; “they are placed on the waiting list.”<sup>83</sup> Hogben clearly viewed manual training as a pedagogical reform, which would introduce new teaching methods. However, the goal at the end of this more liberalised education, as Stout and Riley also argued, was a smoother transition into the workforce:

It has been the fashion to speak of that portion of a man’s education that he receives at school as a preparation for life; in truth man’s education goes on throughout his whole life and the time spent at school is not merely a preparation for life, it is part of life itself. If the manual dexterity and the regular and easy co-ordination of hand and eye and brain that lead to the development of skill in the workman or the engineer, the artist or the surgeon be not developed in youth, then there is a gap between the school life and the after-life that is unnatural and prejudicial to the success of the adult.<sup>84</sup>

Dewey’s criticism of the idea of ‘education as preparation’ was that training students for a specific mode of efficiency based on the status quo was anti-democratic in that “differences of economic opportunity” would “dictate what the future callings” of students were to be. Kliebard cites the continuation of this view of schooling today as an embarrassment. In its modern manifestation, he says, this leads to the attitude that when “jobs are everything” then “being educated, or at least well informed, is simply beside the point”.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1902, p. 34.

<sup>82</sup> John Dewey, *The Sources of a Science of Education*, The Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929), p. 292.

<sup>83</sup> Dewey, 1921, p. 63.

<sup>84</sup> *AJHR*, E-1-B, 1906, p. 36.

<sup>85</sup> Herbert Kliebard, M., *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), p. xiii.

### **The Shifting of the Centre of Gravity: The Developmentalist Rationale for Manual Education.**

A third rationale for manual education frequently called upon by Hogben and school inspectors came from a developmentalist position. In this view, the overriding objective of schooling was to discover through careful scientific study the natural order of child development and to design learning around this. At the heart of this was the idea that the purpose of education is to draw out and develop the individuality, powers and innate abilities of the child through the careful study of child nature, physiology and need. This view grew out of the nineteenth century child study movement, and the work of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Herbart and Spencer, all of whom were quoted liberally by school inspectors in their annual reports during the Hogben era. The aspiration of this movement was the realisation of the humanist ideal; a balance of the spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical faculties. From this viewpoint, manual training was also promoted as a pedagogical reform, but as one that would introduce new practical subjects and teaching methods better suited to ‘child nature’ and ‘child need’ than to industry. The purpose of the school would now be fitted to the nature of the child, rather than the nature of the child being fitted to the school. For some teachers and inspectors the shift from the formality, rote learning and austerity of the mental discipline doctrine that had dominated curriculum in the 1800s, seemed a revolutionary development.

The new concern with the ‘individuality of the child’ and the development of his/her own ‘powers’ marked a fundamental shift in the conception of the child. The child was no longer viewed as “merely an instrument to be operated on, but an agent capable of origination and execution”.<sup>86</sup> Manual and technical education with its emphasis on ‘making and doing’ was seen as the ideal subject in which to bring this more active engagement about. Wanganui inspectors recommended in their 1905 report that a “larger place” be given to manual training and to subjects that lend themselves to “practical treatment”. In addition, they called for a more “all-round view of child nature” and stressed that “individual children must have their individual peculiarities considered”.<sup>87</sup>

Taranaki inspectors invoked the scientific study of child development and argued that the “vast growth in scientific knowledge, the increased knowledge of human physiology, and

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<sup>86</sup> *AJHR*, E- 1B, 1904, p. 44.

<sup>87</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1905, pp. 9-10.

a consequent clearer apprehension of child-nature and child-need have rendered it necessary that old principles must be adapted to the new conditions”.<sup>88</sup>

By 1903, there was a growing impatience among inspectors with the patchwork amendments which had emerged in the first few years of Hogben’s term. Wellington inspectors, for example, remarked on the ‘urgent need’ for syllabus reform suggesting impatiently that, “[t]he time has come when ‘not the pruning knife but the axe’ should be applied with unsparing hand.”<sup>89</sup> The inspectors observed with palpable frustration that a “reasonable syllabus and an intelligent method of examination will result in reasonable and intelligent methods of instruction”.<sup>90</sup> The syllabus as it stood was viewed as an obstacle to intelligent methods and they warned that even the highest ideals and efforts by teachers were limited by its constraints.<sup>91</sup>

In his chairman’s address at the 1904 conference of inspectors of schools and teachers’ Representatives Hogben acknowledged that for those who had not kept abreast of the times it would be a radical departure:

... I need not trace the gradual process by which ...we have all passed from the mental position in which we regarded...education as the imparting of so much information, useful or otherwise, to the present position, in which we concentrate our attention upon the careful development and direction of the child’s natural activities and powers, and the building-up of character. You gentlemen are familiar with that change in our educational outlook. All the best teachers have, step by step, been led to change their view, and have been altering their methods accordingly... To others who have... allowed themselves to fall behind, the change appears as a sudden and complete revolution. Men do not put old wine into new bottles, and therefore the time has come to cease patching and repairing the old syllabus, into which some part of the new ideas had been inserted in previous amendments, and to recast the syllabus entirely...

The important point...is not the number of things that are taught but the spirit, character, and method of the teaching in relation to its purpose of developing the child’s powers. Personally, I do not care one straw how many or how few subjects you include in the syllabus, provided you include enough to enable you to develop these powers in the right way. We now believe with Froebel, and others of the world’s most

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<sup>88</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1904, p.7.

<sup>89</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1903, p. 17.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*



enlightened educators, that the child will learn best, not so much by reading about things in books as by doing – that is, exercising his natural activities – by making things, by observing and testing things for himself; and then, afterwards, by reasoning about them and expressing his thoughts about them. We believe that the “new education,” as it is called, will make not only better workmen and better scholars, but better men and better citizens than the old education could ever produce.<sup>92</sup>

There was a growing feeling that as well as a modifying the content of the syllabus, new methods were required to produce citizens equipped to compete and adapt in a rapidly changing world. The Napier inspectors wrote:

The mere providing of facts for memory-preparation after the manner of getting special fattening food for young ducks and turkeys is neither teaching, training, nor education. Far too much of the early mental fattening process is going on, and too little of that generous and manly training that tends to bring out the real characteristics of children, and produce, as a final product, a real live, observant, and intelligent citizen. Knowledge in itself gives power, and education should give children the power to discover that mankind is progressive, and that the world of thought and humanity is moving rapidly; and if we are to keep abreast in this hard world of competition we must be diligent, observant, active, and apt, for aptitude, after all, is the power that makes adaptation possible.<sup>93</sup>

The scientific orientation towards discovering the natural order of child development transformed the conception of the child’s ‘mind’. The Marlborough Inspector, D. A. Strachan observed:

It was thus discovered that the mind was not as the older educationalists thought, simply a receptacle for whatever might be thrown into it; nor as the later school – the school of Locke – taught, a purely plastic substance subject to external moulding but without initiative. The psychologists under the leadership of Kant discovered that the child was above all a centre of original action, and that the mind was capable of growth and development; and further, that the child’s development must proceed along the natural lines of growth.<sup>94</sup>

For the first time, the idea of ‘learning through doing’ is mentioned by school inspectors along with the idea of educating for critical thinking in a ‘democratic community’.<sup>95</sup> The development of manual training is represented as “the greatest immediate step forward” in

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<sup>92</sup> *AJHR*, E-1C, 1904, p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1903, p. 23.

<sup>94</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1905, p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> *AJHR*, E-2, 1909, p. 126.

education and inspectors emphasise that ‘learning to do things with the hand’ was as “of greater value to mental training than the disentanglement of phrases or the memorising of irregular verbs”.<sup>96</sup>

In adapting to the new syllabus, inspectors allowed teachers a “wide latitude” in their selection of methods, stating, “a cast-iron uniformity is the last thing we would desire, and every encouragement is given to original thought in dealing with the problems of the classroom.”<sup>97</sup> The key to good teaching, they stressed, lay in methods which are to be found only by knowing the child: “knowing him in mind, and soul, and body, and by making an honest endeavour to get at the laws which govern the healthy development of his powers”.<sup>98</sup> In addition to new methods, the idea of student ‘interest’ in learning begins to feature in inspectors’ reports:

A correct guide as to the value of the methods adopted in a school is the extent of the voluntary interest displayed by the pupils. When the instruction follows educative lines, the pupils’ alacrity and enthusiasm are readily recognised...To secure this, good methods – less routine, more variety – are essential.<sup>99</sup>

The changing view of the child meant that the role of the teacher underwent a corresponding shift and was no longer viewed so much as “the giving of information”, but rather as the “fostering of habits of observation which, if maintained throughout the child’s school life will go far towards making him approach his life’s work in a true scientific spirit”.<sup>100</sup> The turn towards realism meant that teachers were encouraged by inspectors to be less of a “perfect paragon” for their students and more of a “good workaday model, with a few lovable failings to keep him in touch with the children”.<sup>101</sup> It is important to note that such statements are counsels of perfection and historians such as Ewing suggest that classroom practice was still formal and, as long as the proficiency exam existed, examination-orientated.

As well as tipping the role of the teacher slightly on its axis, the changing view of the child led to practical modifications in school environment. The discovery of the individual child

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>97</sup> *AJHR*, E-2, 1912, p. xiv.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> *AJHR*, E-5, 1908, p. 18.

<sup>100</sup> *AJHR*, E-2, 1915, p. xxx.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

led, for example, to the introduction of the individual desk. The Wanganui inspectors, in their report for 1906, wrote with some gravitas, that the “progressive spirit has been abroad in our district in matters outside the course of instruction” and had resulted in the decision to adopt the single desk in lieu of the dual:

This step, which for many reasons could be taken only after very serious consideration, carries with it several very important results from the teacher’s point of view, and it is valuable from his point of view because it enables him to do fuller and more adequate justice to his scholars. It secures the independence of each pupil; it recognises his claim for separate and independent treatment; it makes discipline easy; it insists on an adequate amount of air and floor space for each child.<sup>102</sup>

In the same report, Wanganui inspectors urge teachers to study closely a passage from *The School and Society: Being Three Lectures by John Dewey*.<sup>103</sup> Dewey’s principles, they write, should be the guide in all education schemes, methods and management and to grasp the full significance of these “would mean something like a revolution in the methods and management of our schools”.<sup>104</sup>

I may have exaggerated somewhat in order to make plain the typical points of the old education: its passivity of attitude, its mechanical massing of children, its uniformity of curriculum and method. It may be summed up by stating that the centre of gravity is outside the child. It is in the teacher, the text-book, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself. On that basis, there is not much to be said about the life of the child. A good deal might be said about the studying of the child, but the school is not the place where the child lives. Now that change which is coming into our education is the shifting of the centre of gravity. It is a change, a revolution, not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical centre shifted from the earth to the sun. In this case, the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the centre about which they are organised.<sup>105</sup>

It is possible to see in both Hogben’s new 1904 syllabus and in the reports of the inspectors, the conflicting beginnings of the different orientations to curriculum which would shape much of the educational debate in the first half of the twentieth century and beyond. As a new subject, manual and handwork education was used with dexterity by

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<sup>102</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1906, p. 17.

<sup>103</sup> John Dewey, *The School and Society: Being Three Lectures by John Dewey*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1900).

<sup>104</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1906, p. 17.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* Also: Dewey, 1900, pp. 47-73.

both the educationalists who championed social efficiency arguments for education and those who saw the purpose of education as being to develop the child's individual powers. The inspectors' reports demonstrate the way each of these educational doctrines manifested in new conceptions of the child and the role of the teacher while also providing rationales for improving school conditions. As demonstrated, these different doctrines were not necessarily mutually exclusive, and Hogben, who was an astute educationist, sometimes appealed to all three of these in the same speech.

### **Moving Towards Realism**

In vocational education, the turn towards a practical 'realism' was underpinned by social motivations and the broader range of non-academic subjects was viewed as providing a more accessible and practical education for a wider range of students.<sup>106</sup> In view of this, teachers were encouraged to develop their own methods on the basis of a "more intimate acquaintance with the psychology of the young mind" and the practical applications of the subjects taught.<sup>107</sup> Inspectors articulated the new spirit of Hogben's 1904 syllabus as follows:

The keynote of the modern education is realism. This is fully recognised in the syllabus that is henceforth to be our guide. Towards natural phenomena the attitude of teacher and pupil must now undergo a complete change. Facts within daily life and experience of the children must be studied realistically. All learning must be from the things themselves, not about things. The teaching must as far as possible engage the self-activities of the pupil and bear directly on his surroundings.<sup>108</sup>

The correlation of 'drawing' with manual and technical education in the syllabus is of particular importance because the more progressive conception of manual education as a pedagogical reform promoted by Hogben broadened the way drawing was conceptualised. As the first step towards the introduction of manual and technical education, it is not surprising that the prescriptions for drawing in the syllabus were highly stylised and formal in conception and application and emphasised the development of practical skills that would be useful for the 'decorative and industrial arts'. The drawing prescriptions gazetted in the 1899 syllabus focussed on accuracy, technical skill and the memorising of

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<sup>106</sup> Although subjects such as manual and technical classes were presented as catering to a more egalitarian social order, they could equally well be seen as preserving the status quo with classes for different social strata.

<sup>107</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1904, pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

geometric terminology. Pupils in the early standards, for example, were required to be able to draw straight lines and to distinguish vertical, horizontal and oblique lines as well as be able to demonstrate the meaning of 'diagonal', 'triangle', 'equilateral' and 'isosceles'. Freehand drawing exercises were related in each standard directly to the geometric forms studied and progressed from copying diagrams from the blackboard onto slates in the early standards, to the use of drawing books and drawing from simple models in the sixth standard. These drawing exercises were often conducted in a dictation fashion with the student copying the teacher's diagrams line by line. The goal was accurate imitation. Accordingly, the primary criteria of a 'good' work of art lay in the degree to which it was an accurate representation or imitation of the 'real world'.

Although drawing remained distinct from manual education in the 1904 syllabus because it was 'pass subject', for obvious reasons it also began to be considered a manual subject. This in turn led to the gradual introduction of new branches of drawing such as brushwork, free-arm drawing and copying from actual objects. Although still highly stylised and formalistic, these new practices were slightly more expressive. Also significant, was the perceptible shift of emphasis in relation to the aims and purposes of drawing in general, which was largely because of its new affiliation with manual subjects. Wanganui inspectors remarked on this change in their annual report:

In drawing, as in other subjects of our school course, "a change has come over the spirit of our dreams," and we are to follow here also a natural order of things. We are to bring our drawing more into touch with nature, and cultivate and develop the child's innate desire to reproduce the objects it meets with day by day. Further, we are to correlate drawing with object lessons and science. We are to ask our pupils to draw the objects we have been talking about in conversation, object and science lessons.<sup>109</sup>

Not all teachers embraced the new spirit in drawing, and North Canterbury and Auckland Inspectors reported that:

Many teachers of timorous constitution fear to leave the old well-worn paths, and cling to conventional forms, sacrificing the educational value of drawing to the mechanical reproduction of a copy. Drawings should

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<sup>109</sup> *AJHR*, E-1B, 1903, p. 14.

be made from the actual objects, reproduced from memory, and as far as possible correlated with nature study.<sup>110</sup>

...The drawing of objects should hold a much more prominent position in the syllabus and in the work of our schools than it now does. What is the practical value of being able to make a good or satisfactory copy of another's drawing on the flat? Yet this is all that the great majority of our pupils ever attain to. The direction in the syllabus that only "objects that have no appreciable thickness" are to be used in the drawing of the first three standards makes it impossible to lay a foundation for object drawing in the lower half of the school. In this matter the syllabus is behind the times.<sup>111</sup>

The views of the school inspectors were at times at odds with the specialist opinions of the drawing masters. For example, Mr. Watkin, Drawing Master for the Auckland Education Board, invoked the history of the mimetic tradition in his criticisms of the new emphasis on drawing from objects:

There is a mistaken notion abroad that the drawing-copy should be totally abolished, and that all drawing should be taught from the actual object. It has been the practice of all the great schools of art in all ages to begin by teaching the pupil at first how to copy the drawings of others, so as to master the means by which imitation is effected, and then to apply these modes of imitation to the representation of the real object. Drawing from the real object is a process of interpretation, and can no more precede the imitative process of drawing from a copy than can vulgar fractions be taught before simple addition. Much of the so-called nature drawing is positively harmful, tending only to careless observation and slipshod work.<sup>112</sup>

Viewed broadly, Stout's introduction of drawing as a core subject in 1885 was significant in that it created a demand for specialised drawing teachers to support generalist teachers and provided an opening for the introduction of manual and handwork education. The subsequent correlation of these activities with drawing led to more varied techniques and methods such as the introduction of colour, brushwork and drawing from objects. Where Stout conceptualised the introduction of manual education as a social reform, which would break down class barriers and make education more relevant to colonial life, Hogben saw it as a pedagogical reform that would bring about a more organic connection between the various subjects and encourage more practical learning and varied teaching methods. In

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<sup>110</sup> *AJHR*, E-2, 1910, p. 139.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>112</sup> *AJHR*, E-2, 1913, p. x.

both cases the arts were viewed as a catalyst for educational reform, as they would be again under Beeby's directorship in the 1950s.

## **Chapter 4: International Progressive Influences on Art and Craft Education in the 1920s and 1930s**

The previous chapter outlined the way art education developed in the New Zealand primary school curriculum up until 1915 and focussed on institutional changes at a national level. This chapter discusses international influences on the growth of ideas about the role of art and craft in education in the two decades that followed, illustrating the way ambitions for art education were both formed and reformed by social change and a progressive-liberal educational ideology. These influences are discussed with reference to three important developments: the role of the Carnegie Foundation in exposing New Zealand educators to progressive ideas abroad; the La Trobe Scheme, which brought art educators from England into New Zealand art schools and colleges to modernise art teaching; and the New Education Fellowship Conference in 1937.

### ***The Carnegie Grants***

The degree of intellectual isolation that existed in New Zealand in the early 1920s is difficult to imagine today. In his memoir *The Biography of an Idea*, Clarence Beeby observed that although by the end of the Great War radical thinkers such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Bertrand Russell, A. N. Whitehead, John Dewey, Cyril Burt, Charles Spearman, Percy Nunn, L. M. Terman and A. S. Neill were beginning to appear on the educational horizon, New Zealand's isolation meant they remained known only to a few:

A return journey to Britain took nearly three months, and a reply to a letter at least that long. Books on serious subjects were scarce, libraries were poor and the supply of periodicals and overseas newspapers unbelievably scant; as far as I know none ever reached the training college ...The occasional educators who could get beyond New Zealand's shores on their own resources were envied rarities. Except for some servicemen and women who got the chance to study overseas at its close, the Great War had shut us off still further from intellectual contacts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C.E. Beeby, *The Biography of an Idea - Beeby on Education* (Wellington: New Zealand Council For Educational Research, 1992), pp. 44-45.



The writings of international philosophers and educationalists, he recalls, remained entirely absent from university lectures. “It would be unfair to give the impression that educational thinking in New Zealand was stuck somewhere in the nineteenth century but, for the educator with an original mind, thinking was a lonely business.”<sup>2</sup>

There were, however, a small number of international educational initiatives during the 1920s, which helped to mitigate New Zealand’s intellectual isolation. One of the most influential was the Carnegie Visitor Grants and Commonwealth Programme, which provided the opportunity for New Zealand scholars to travel abroad to study new methods in education. The Carnegie Corporation was founded in 1911 by American industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) who made his fortune in the steel industry. Carnegie donated primarily to educational, cultural and peacemaking organisations and had a particular interest in libraries, having largely educated himself.

The Corporation’s Commonwealth programme began in Canada and Newfoundland and expanded from 1926 to 1941 to include South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and other parts of the Commonwealth. The purpose of the programme was to offer the recipients an “opportunity to meet their professional colleagues, to exchange ideas and information, to bring themselves up to date in research and teaching in their fields...and to study education and developments of special relevance to their own institutions and countries”.<sup>3</sup> By 1938 a total of 51 visitors, 26 drawn from New Zealand educational institutions, 24 from libraries and museums, and one city official, had received grants to travel and study abroad.<sup>4</sup> Beeby recalls that the Corporation “showed uncanny skill in choosing as recipients of its grants men and woman who were to occupy key position in New Zealand’s intellectual and cultural life”.<sup>5</sup> By the 1940s, he writes, the people who had had the opportunity to study abroad under Carnegie Visitors’ Grants “reads like a Who’s Who of leaders in their professions. Thomas Hunter, James Hight, James Shelley, Frank Milner, Gilbert Archey, Duncan Rae, Crawford [and Gwendolen] Somerset, and Alistair McIntosh”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Stackpole, H, *Carnegie Corporation Commonwealth Programme Travel Grants 1947-1962* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1963), pp. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> C. Dollard, *Memorandum of Grants to Individuals* (The Carnegie Foundation, 1938), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> C. E. Beeby, “The Beginnings of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research: Reminiscences of C.E. Beeby at the Jubilee Dinner, (New Zealand Council for Educational Research 50th Anniversary Dinner),” (Wellington: NZCER, 1984), pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

It was through a Carnegie Grant, for example, that Gwendolen and Crawford Somerset were able to attend a New Education Fellowship conference in 1935. The Somersets were pioneers in community education in New Zealand and Crawford became director of the Fielding Community Centre in 1938. Gwendolen, along with Beatrice Beeby, (wife of Clarence Beeby) was instrumental in the development of the Playcentre movement. The Carnegie Grant also allowed the Somersets to visit educational experiments in the United States including the Banks Street College of Education (where Richardson would teach in the early 1970s), the Dalton School in New York, and A. S. Neill's radical school, Summerhill, in Britain. Crawford Somerset was assistant master at Oxford District High school from 1922-1928. At a Workers Education Association (WEA) summer school in Oxford, Canterbury, in 1920-21 the Somersets met James Shelley, first professor of education at Canterbury College, who urged them to write a sociological study of the Oxford community where they lived. This was subsequently published by the New Zealand Council of Educational Research as *Littledene* in 1938.<sup>7</sup>

One of the Carnegie Corporation's most noteworthy contributions was the provision of funding for the establishment of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) in 1934. Beeby states that the Council was assured of \$17,500 a year for five years and possible funding for a further five years if the organisation's work was successful.<sup>8</sup> This was a unique arrangement in that the Carnegie Corporation proposed the idea for the organisation itself but left the Council free to develop its own policy entirely independently. Beeby recalls:

When I came to Wellington in 1934 as the first director of the Council, I hunted in vain for any document telling me what it was the Corporation wanted us to do. I assumed some key letter had gone astray, and I wrote to Dr Keppel, the President of the Corporation, saying that I imagined the Corporation had stated its policy for the Council somewhere and asking him for a copy. The reply came immediately... He wrote, '... You are perfectly correct in thinking that the Corporation has a firm policy for the NZCER. Its policy is that you should do whatever you

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<sup>7</sup> Geraldine McDonald, "Somerset, Gwendolen Lucy 1894-1988," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (Wellington: Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2007); McDonald points out that Gwendolen's contribution to the book *Littledene* was not acknowledged.

<sup>8</sup> Beeby, "The Beginnings of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research: Reminiscences of C.E. Beeby at the Jubilee Dinner" (New Zealand Council for Educational Research 50th Anniversary Dinner), 1984. Note: This amount is listed as pounds in Beeby's speech. However, all other sums are in dollar amounts. In addition there is record in the NZCER Carnegie archive material of a letter from Keppel to the Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation on the 25/9/33 stating that the balance available for appropriation in the British Dominions and Colonies Fund was \$87,000 payable \$17,500 annually for five years beginning 1933-49, so it is likely that the correct denomination is dollars rather than pounds (Subject file EDUA, ACCNO 10533, p.7).

think best for education in New Zealand. But if I may offer an older man's advice, you should not go for quick results. Yours cordially, Frederick P. Keppel.' The officers of the Corporation had taken great care, in the terms of the grant, to make the Council free of all other authorities in N.Z., and they completed the job by making us free of the Corporation itself.<sup>9</sup>

Over its first ten years of operation NZCER received grants totalling \$177,000 from the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>10</sup> The Corporation also funded visits to New Zealand by specialists in areas where expertise was lacking such as the organisation of library services and the management of museum exhibits. Beeby held that these visits "prepared the seedbeds" from which grew a range of national services such as the Country Library Service, directed by Geoffrey Alley, a student of James Shelley, and the Museum Education Service both of which received generous grants from Corporation.<sup>11</sup> Many of these services and the people associated with them were to play significant roles in the spread of progressive educational ideas and in particular the development of arts education in the wider community.

The Carnegie Art Sets given to university colleges and to secondary schools were perhaps one of the earliest attempts to introduce the general public to reproductions of the world's great paintings.<sup>12</sup> In 1934, for example, Victoria University received an art collection which included 230 books and 2200 pictures, courtesy of the Corporation.<sup>13</sup> Another initiative was the establishment of the highly successful 'Box Scheme' run under the auspices of the WEA. Developed in 1926 by Shelley and run by Geoffrey Alley, brother of Gwendolen Somerset and the country's first National Librarian, the scheme was boosted by a \$5000.00 grant for books from the Carnegie Corporation. The Box Scheme consisted of a series of twenty-four boxes each containing a printed lecture and a carefully selected series of art prints, plays, music and anthologies. Much like a book club, participants were expected to read the accompanying notes before coming to a discussion group. After working through the contents of the box, the group would send it on to the next group. The scheme introduced modern paintings, plays, books and music to communities in small towns and isolated rural areas, providing "the first major inroad of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Stackpole, *Carnegie Corporation Commonwealth Programme Travel Grants 1947-1962*, p. 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Note: Beeby recalls that the museum Education Service received an initial grant of around \$20,000.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Barrowman, *Victoria University of Wellington 1899-1999: A History* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999), p. 50.

the arts and their appreciation on a national level in New Zealand”.<sup>14</sup> In his book *Adult Education in New Zealand*, Thompson writes that as the scheme developed, new Box sets were created and included material for the study of other subjects such as experimental psychology.<sup>15</sup> Country schoolteachers often led the discussion groups and some found the resources useful for their senior students. In Thompson’s view the Box Scheme:

...Provided what no other agency at that time made possible, and introduced modern plays and painting to thousands who, but for the box scheme, might have remained indifferent to forms of art of higher value than *The Stag at Bay*.<sup>16</sup>

The influence of Carnegie-funded initiatives such as the Visitor Grants, Box Scheme and Country Library Service is hard to gauge. However, it is clear that these provided a conduit for exposure to art movements and innovations in progressive education. Both the Box Scheme and the Country Library Service demonstrate an innovative and locally conceived solution to the geographic problem of educating people who lived in rural isolation. At its height in 1932, the Box Scheme had a combined membership of over 2076 and was circulating between 67 groups. Because of its low administrative costs, the scheme continued to run during the depression years and enabled the WEA to maintain contact with students.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1930s, the Carnegie Corporation continued to provide grants for the development of the arts in New Zealand. In 1934, Auckland University received \$5000.00 for art teaching materials and the following year the Auckland Society of Arts received \$6,000 of ‘grants-in aid’ for travel and study abroad for New Zealand artists.<sup>18</sup> A long list of universities and training colleges, high schools and community centres received grants for art and music study materials as well as books. Altogether the Carnegie Corporation gave grants totalling more than \$600,000 during the 1930s to further the development of education in New Zealand.<sup>19</sup> In the next fifteen years, from 1947 to 1962, a further 133

<sup>14</sup> David Hall, O. W, *New Zealand Adult Education* (London: Joseph, 1970), p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> A. B. Thompson, *Adult Education in New Zealand a Critical and Historical Survey* (Christchurch: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1945).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102: *The Stag at Bay* is a reference to a popular style of painting which frequently depicted romantic scenes such as a stag backlit against a bay or a lurid sunset, painted in the style of Victorian modernism.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Stackpole, 1963, pp. 52-54; While the Carnegie grants were all educational in nature they varied widely. In 1936 for example, Otago University received \$500.00 for the excavation of a moa-hunter camp on the Waitaki River.

<sup>19</sup> Stackpole, *Carnegie Corporation Commonwealth Programme Travel Grants 1947-1962*, pp. 12-13.

New Zealanders were to receive Carnegie travel grants totalling \$391, 465.00.<sup>20</sup>

In 1920s the most innovative work related to the development of art and crafts education seemed to lie outside the primary school field. Schemes run by the WEA, technical colleges, district high schools and community associations were generally in advance in both the ideology and methods of the primary school system. The reasons for this are not immediately clear. Although secondary school teachers were graded, they were not assessed under as rigorous a system as primary teachers. However, secondary schools were still constrained by the prescriptions for public examinations, especially the old Matriculation examination. McGeorge suggests that innovation in secondary schools may have been possible because of the greater *mana* of secondary school principals, some of whom were national figures.<sup>21</sup>

The progressive ideology, experimentations and scholarship of visionary educationalists such as J. E. Strachan at Rangiora High School, L. J. Wild at Fielding Agricultural High School and the Somersets at the Fielding Community Centre, to name a few, set high calibre examples of educational innovation.<sup>22</sup> Strachan, for example, inspired by Cecil Reddie's progressive boarding school at Abbotsholme in Staffordshire, England, instituted a system of full self-government at Rangiora High in 1921. The school was closely linked to the community, offering a technical and academic educational programme, and was widely regarded as an unique experiment in social education. At Fielding Agricultural High School, Wild, who was inspired by Strachan's work, developed an innovative educational programme orientated around agricultural studies.<sup>23</sup> Wild's work won the support of Peter Fraser, Minister of Education, who approved his proposal to link the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 11; Some noteworthy recipients of grants during these years (the majority of whom were male) include G.T. Alley in 1960, who ran the country library service under Shelly's direction and who was to become the first National Librarian. G.T. Alley was brother of Gwendolen Somerset who also received a Carnegie travel grant in the 1930s, and peace activist Rewi Alley. Other recipients include J C Beaglehole from Victoria University in 1962, Poet Allen Curnow in 1949 to study creative writing in USA, Artist Colin McCahon in 1957 to study collections and methods of art museums in the United States; A E Campbell 1949 and George Parkyn 1959 both directors of NZCER, NZ historian Keith Sinclair, Philip Smithells, Director School of Physical Education, University of Otago and pioneer in the development physical education in NZ schools.

<sup>21</sup> *Mana*: Power, influence, psychic force, prestige or authority. *Mana* may be bestowed upon people through recognition of their deeds and actions, or people may be born with *mana* through the genealogical prestige of their family; McGeorge, C., *Per. Com.*, Nov. 11, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> See: J E. Strachan, *The School Looks at Life: An Experiment in Social Education*, Educational Research Series, No. 9 (Wellington: NZCER, 1943), p. 93; G. L. Somerset, *Two Experiments in Education: Oxford and Fielding 1921-1948* (Wellington: Wellington National Council of Adult Education, 1972), p. 9; J. C Dakin, *The Community Centre Story: Being an Account and a Discussion of New Zealand's Experiments with Community Centres and Kindred Institutions* (Wellington: National Council of Adult Education, 1979), pp. 2-15.

<sup>23</sup> See: L. J. Wild, *An Experiment in Self-Government*, Educational Research Series, No. 8 (Wellington: NZCER, 1938).

agricultural high school to a community centre for adult education, which was to be run by the Somersets. Fraser's decision in 1938 was reported in the *Wairarapa Age*, as follows:

At the Fielding Agricultural High School, Mr Fraser said, he hoped to undertake an experiment, which would, in his opinion, be of great and lasting value to the people of the Dominion. If it were successful, the experiment would be extended elsewhere. He has said that education ceased only with the grave. There was a need for educational institutions holding out friendship and a welcome to boys and girls after they left school; to adolescents and adults – giving them the opportunity after they had taken up working life of obtaining still further education.<sup>24</sup>

The successful experimentations in the 1920s and 1930s of educational innovators who lay outside the primary school system are worthy of a study in their own right, and could well be seen to have prepared the ground for the second wave of educational experimentation and community education that followed in the 1950s.

### ***The La Trobe Scheme***

Named after William Sanderson La Trobe, the first Superintendent of Technical Education in New Zealand and initiated in 1922, the La Trobe Scheme was a Department of Education policy whereby young artists predominantly trained at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London were recruited to take charge of art classes in Dunedin, Auckland, Napier and Wanganui.<sup>25</sup> The purpose of both the Carnegie grants and the La Trobe Scheme was to expose New Zealand educators to new ideas abroad in order to modernise educational practice. The Carnegie grants allowed New Zealand educators to travel, while the La Trobe Scheme brought European teachers directly into technical schools and art colleges. Positions were advertised in the *Times Educational Supplement* and at the RCA in the hope that recruiting highly qualified staff from British institutions would improve the quality of art teaching in technical schools and colleges and bring new ideas and techniques from European institutions. The La Trobe Scheme represented a significant extension to the education boards' practice of hiring drawing masters from overseas.

Under the scheme, William Henry Allen, Robert Nettleton Field, Francis Shurrock, Christopher Perkins, Roland Hipkins, James Douglas, Charlton Edgar, Frederick Vincent

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<sup>24</sup> Dakin, 1979, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *AJHR*, E-5, 1923, p. 8.

Ellis, Thomas Hugh Jenkin and Gordon Tovey were employed at colleges and technical schools throughout New Zealand. Tovey was the only local appointment under the La Trobe Scheme. Sir James Allen, the New Zealand High Commissioner in London, who had previously held both the defense and education portfolios in Massey's Reform Ministry in 1912, interviewed the RCA graduates (Jenkin, Ellis, Allen and Field) in London.

The La Trobe Scheme was significant in the development of art and craft education for several reasons. First and foremost, the artists employed under the scheme made valuable contributions to New Zealand art through their own art practice, writings and teaching.<sup>26</sup> Field in particular had a major influence on young painters, many of whom went on to become New Zealand's most noteworthy, including Doris Lusk, Colin McCahon, Toss Wollaston and Russell Clark.<sup>27</sup> Second, the La Trobe Scheme prefigured Beeby's educational reforms in the 1950s in terms of administrative strategy. Where La Trobe hired fine art graduates from the Royal College of Art in London to modernise art teaching in technical schools, Beeby was to hire fine art graduates and physical education specialist advisors from abroad to introduce new ideas and teaching methods into the primary school curriculum via these 'fringe subjects.' The administrative structure of the La Trobe Scheme was also mirrored in the national art specialist team of the Art and Craft Branch, which came into being in 1946 with the appointment of Tovey as first National Supervisor of Art and Crafts. Gordon Tovey also employed RCA graduates in a tiered structure, as well as third year education students who he 'hand picked' from training colleges to become art specialists. In addition, while Tovey himself was a local appointment to the La Trobe Scheme, he played an important role in drawing Beeby's attention to Richardson's work in its early beginnings at Oruaiti. Under Tovey's direction, many Art and Crafts Branch specialist advisors visited Richardson and spent considerable time working alongside his students.

William La Trobe was hired in 1904 to succeed Riley at the Wellington School of Design and held this position for 15 years until he was made Superintendent of Technical Education in 1919. He is described as a "softly spoken almost gentle man" of "high

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<sup>26</sup> The Hocken Library at the University of Otago has an extensive collection of works by the La Trobe artists. See Rosemary Entwisle, *The Dunedin School of Art and the La Trobe Scheme* (Dunedin: Hocken Library University of Otago, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> Hamish Keith, *The Big Picture: A History of New Zealand Art from 1642*, (Auckland: Godwit, 2007).

intellectual calibre” and “broad human sympathies” who shared many of Riley’s educational views, particularly in relation to pre-vocational education.<sup>28</sup> La Trobe viewed the training in technical schools as a “bridge between school and work” and warned against the tendency to “academize” these subjects.<sup>29</sup> Like the Wellington School of Design, most technical schools and colleges of art at this time were affiliated with the South Kensington School of Art in London. This meant that as well as teaching the standard ‘fine art’ subjects of painting and drawing, the La Trobe teachers were required to teach ‘applied art’, which included instruction in subjects necessary for students who intended to pursue careers in architecture and commercial printing. This requirement stirred debate in the art community about the distinctions between ‘fine art’ and ‘applied art’. Fine art was considered to be ‘above’ the concerns of everyday life, whereas applied art was viewed by the art establishment as trade oriented and populist.

The views of Francis Shurrock, who was appointed modelling and craft master at the Canterbury College School of Art were representative of the La Trobe artists’ orientation towards distinctions between high art and craft. Shurrock believed, like Riley and La Trobe, that art “must have a social purpose if it was to have any relevance to society” and argued for “the complete integration of crafts with the fine arts”.<sup>30</sup> He condemned the idea of placing “the so-called Fine Arts’ on a pedestal” referring to this as “that sickly idea of art as an escape from the crudities of existence”.<sup>31</sup>

Gordon Tovey joined Field, Charlton D. Edgar and Allen at King Edward Technical College in Dunedin in 1932. His initial brief was to bring an appreciation of design and practical knowledge of the commercial art world to the school.<sup>32</sup> Tovey came from a background in commercial printing, a field where new techniques were constantly evolving. His views about the social purpose of education were consonant with the ideas of La Trobe and Riley. When he became head of the art department of the King Edward

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<sup>28</sup> Nichol, 1940, p. 126; *From Riley to Royal*, 1986, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Nichol, 1940, p. 149.

<sup>30</sup> Gail McDonald Ross, “New Zealand Prints 1900-1950: An Unseen Heritage” (PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 2006), p. 55.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Stocker, *Francis Shurrock: Shaping New Zealand Sculpture* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2000), p. 39

<sup>32</sup> H. H. Tombs, *A Century of Art in Otago: Being a Survey of the Work of Otago’s Painters, Writers and Musicians* (Wellington: Tombs, 1948), p. 86.



Technical College in 1936, he changed the emphasis from an English model to a more progressive inter-disciplinary model.<sup>33</sup>

Michael Dunn observes that although the La Trobe Scheme might have resulted in an influx of academic teachers with little new to contribute, the younger artists who were appointed responded with enthusiasm to the challenges of teaching in New Zealand and introduced a new stimulus to the art scene.<sup>34</sup> Many of the La Trobe teachers were interested in Japanese woodblock printing and introduced their students to this medium and to lino cutting, processes that were rarely used by artists in New Zealand at this time. Hipkins, Field and Allen shared Shurrock's interest in printmaking and Hipkins promoted lino cutting as especially suitable for school children.<sup>35</sup> Shurrock also introduced his students to lino cutting and made available his own collection of Japanese woodcuts.<sup>36</sup>

Several of the artists, Perkins, Shurrock, Allen and Hipkins in particular, contributed articles to periodicals and journals such as *Art in New Zealand*, *NZ Potter*, *Tomorrow*, the *Lyttelton Times*, *The Wellington Evening Post* and *The Studio*. In addition, the La Trobe teachers also joined, established and in some cases were rejected by various art societies. Both Field and Allen, for example, were regarded as "dangerous bearers of modern, 'new-fangled' ideas and had their work rejected by the Otago Art society".<sup>37</sup> Hipkins, who was appointed art master at Napier Technical College in 1922, started the Napier Society of Arts and Crafts the following year. He was also a foundation member of the NZ Society of Artists in 1933 and one of two vice presidents, with the other being Francis Shurrock.

For many of the staff arriving under the La Trobe Scheme the honeymoon period was brief as they faced often inadequate technical facilities, a provincial mindset and their tenure coincided with the beginnings of the depression and World War II.<sup>38</sup> To make matters worse, in some cases the job description on arrival did not match the one advertised. At Wellington Technical College, for instance, Perkins was surprised to find that he was expected to teach signwriting and lettering and refused, saying he was

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<sup>33</sup> David Bell, 'Toveyism in Perspective' in Roger W Hardie, "*The Buds of Flowering*": *An Archive List of Department of Education Art and Crafts Specialist Staff 1938-1989* (Auckland: R. Hardie, 2005), p. 97.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Dunn, *New Zealand Painting: A Concise History* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), pp. 24-25

<sup>35</sup> Dunn, 2003, p. 24-25.

<sup>36</sup> McDonald Ross, 2006, p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> C Petersen, *R. N. Field the Dunedin Years 1925-1945* (Palmerston North: Manawatu Art Gallery, 1989), p. 3

<sup>38</sup> Stocker, 2000, p. 29.

unqualified to do so.<sup>39</sup> Shurrock too, was underwhelmed to discover that half of his teaching time would be spent teaching twelve and thirteen year olds drawing and modelling. He had ‘limited patience’ with the secondary school students and regarded them as “an imposition directed at what should have been a sculpture department”.<sup>40</sup> Allen and Field, who applied together for two positions at the Dunedin School of Art, arrived to find “a mere seven students officially enrolled in the full time course in 1925, all aged about 13”.<sup>41</sup> There was also only one other staff member, the curriculum was both underdeveloped and of a lower standard than they were accustomed to and the rooms were neither heated nor ventilated.<sup>42</sup> Both Jenkin and Ellis, who were hired in 1922, resigned in 1925 and were replaced by Field and Allen in the same year.<sup>43</sup>

The combination of inadequate technical facilities, and the social and artistic isolation from the European art scene proved limiting and discouraging for the La Trobe teachers. Allen described the artistic milieu in Dunedin as “safe”, “representing a past age”, avoiding “experiment” and “full of sentiment”.<sup>44</sup> Shurrock also “turned from initial idealism on his arrival to eventual bitter disenchantment:”

...Christchurch claims to be the art centre of the Dominion, and if that is true, which I doubt, then the art of the Dominion is not only 40 years behind the times but slipping back all the time...the student material here is good and it is tragic to watch its slow formation into complacent incompetency.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the “manifestly inadequate” facilities at the Sculpture Department, Shurrock was further disappointed by the lack of status afforded to sculpture in New Zealand, claiming, “If you didn’t do painting, you weren’t an artist”.<sup>46</sup> Stocker points out in *Francis Shurrock: Shaping New Zealand Sculpture*, that although “...it would be easy to characterise this state of affairs as philistine, a fairer description would be ‘parochial.’

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<sup>39</sup> J Garrett, *An Artist’s Daughter: With Christopher Perkins in New Zealand, 1929-1934* (Auckland: Shoal Bay Press, 1986), p. 102.

<sup>40</sup> Stocker, 2000, p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> Petersen, 1989, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Entwisle, 1989, pp. 9-11.

<sup>43</sup> Tombs, 1948, p. 86.

<sup>44</sup> Petersen, 1989, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Stocker, 2000, pp. 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

New Zealand in the 1920s lacked the history, the wealth and the population base for sculpture to be accorded proper recognition.”<sup>47</sup>

London was well in advance of New Zealand in the sense that there already existed a broader definition of what constituted art. However, in actual teaching methods and technique, Shurrock was nearer the traditional end of the spectrum. Although his training at the RCA meant that he had a solid grounding in the classical techniques of sculpting, the fact that Shurrock was a student at the RCA before the Great War, meant that his classes at the Canterbury College School of Art in Christchurch were based very much on a nineteenth century approach to sculpture. Stocker’s interviews with Shurrock’s former students suggest they were not encouraged to talk about art, and “can’t recall the word cubism ever being mentioned”.<sup>48</sup> However, he was less hostile to modernism than many of his colleagues and he did defend it from attacks by conservative Christchurch critics.<sup>49</sup>

Although Shurrock’s teaching was firmly anchored in the more traditional techniques of fine craftsmanship, this did not represent a conservative orientation to practice.<sup>50</sup> Former student, W. R. Jim Allen recalls, “[h]e maintained a fine balance between instruction and ‘letting you get on with it.’”<sup>51</sup>

Allen, who later worked alongside Richardson’s students at Oruaiti, studied under Shurrock at Canterbury College School of Art. He found that his early training in nineteenth century technique with Shurrock stood him in good stead when he became a student at the RCA in London, as he was the only student in his intake able to earn his living helping other royal academician (RA) sculptors. The disadvantage of his classical training in Christchurch, however, was that all the art history he had been exposed to predated the Great War, which led to a great culture shock when he arrived in Britain in 1949. Allen recalls:

I'd missed out...I mean we didn't even talk about impressionist painters, so we had a very narrow vision of the art world and all the fantastic things that were happening at that time. So when I got to the RCA College it was a very abrupt cultural shock for me and students laughed

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

at what I was doing, you know, it was something beyond their comprehension, but the staff of the sculpture school were much more tolerant.<sup>52</sup>

The school influence at RCA was totally different, Allen said. Frank Dobson, who was professor of sculpture from 1946-53, was a friend of Roger Fry, a sculptor, painter and art critic who was a member of the Bloomsbury group. Allen recalls that ‘Dobby’ as he was known, was friends with people like Ferdinand Léger, a French painter, sculptor and filmmaker, and sculptor Henry Moore, and was very free with his ideas and his thinking. Working in his spare time in the nineteenth century tradition for royal academicians but having a main course of twentieth century art was an odd but fertile experience for Allen:

...It was very peculiar. But it had quite an influence on my thinking because I had this very tight training in Christchurch, and then I had my foot in these two centuries in London.<sup>53</sup>

Allen was appointed in 1953 by Gordon Tovey as Field Officer for the Art and Craft Branch. During this time, he spent a period of about six months working alongside Richardson’s students, an experience that was to have a profound influence on his own work. Allen’s experiences at Oruaiti are discussed in chapter nine.

### ***The La Trobe Artists’ Interest in Maori Art***

The artists hired under the La Trobe Scheme took a keen interest in Maori art and in the use of local materials. In more recent years this interest has raised the complex and problematic question of Pakeha ‘appropriation’ of Maori culture, an issue that was to arise when the Art and Craft Branch began to promote the teaching of Maori art and crafts under Tovey’s direction.<sup>54</sup> Viewed in the context of their times, it is clear, however, that the La Trobe teachers regarded themselves as more than cultural ambassadors for conventional European art. Perkins, for example, viewed his role in New Zealand as being to “assist at the birth of a native idiom in art, free from the oppressive and foreign influence of traditional European art centres”.<sup>55</sup> In his speech at his reception for the Wellington Technical College position, Perkins argued:

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<sup>52</sup> W R Jim Allen, Interview, October 7, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Pakeha: A New Zealander of Caucasian descent, or any non-Maori person.

<sup>55</sup> Garrett, 1987, p. 31.

New Zealand should free itself from attempting to keep in step with European movements and strike out on a line of its own. We must... make a break in the accepted use of materials, and develop to some extent our own technique.<sup>56</sup>

Perkins' stance riled heavyweights within the Wellington art establishment who bristled at his implication that "real art in New Zealand was still unborn" and that "their work represented the ashes from which the phoenix of true New Zealand art would arise."<sup>57</sup> During his time in New Zealand, Perkins accepted an invitation from Johannes C. Andersen at the Alexander Turnbull Library to illustrate *The Maori Helicon*, a collection of poems based on Maori legends and he spent many hours in the Wellington Museum studying carvings and folklore.<sup>58</sup> He produced about thirty formalised drawings for this volume, which he regarded as "a footnote or glossary to the poems".<sup>59</sup>

The zealous approach of Perkins to forging a 'real New Zealand art' is representative of the low profile given to Maori art at this time. Hamish Keith observes that in the first half of the twentieth century:

Maori art existed only in the official versions adapted to illustrate school journals and in the carvings vandalised by red paint in the country's natural history museums. It was an art of an apparently vanished people, consigned by well-meaning elders and ethnologists to a largely fictitious past and a counterfeit chronology.<sup>60</sup>

At Wellington Technical College, Riley, the first director, was one of the earliest to draw attention to Maori art and craft in the 1880s. He urged the incorporation of Maori motifs in current artwork and the creation of a New Zealand School of Art to replace the unimaginative copying of European models. He also recommended the study of indigenous plants and the introduction of New Zealand foliage into designs.<sup>61</sup>

It was this kind of 'borrowing' of Maori motifs that resulted in accusations of appropriation in the following years. Francis Pound considers this issue usefully in his

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Note: *The Maori Helicon* was not published possibly because the publishers were overtaken by the depression before the book came out. Garrett doubts that either Perkins or the poet was paid for their work on this.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Keith, 2007, pp. 200-201.

<sup>61</sup> *From Riley to Royal*, 1986, p. 12.

book, *The Space Between, Pakeha Use of Maori Motifs in Modernist New Zealand Art*.<sup>62</sup> Here, in a post-structuralist reading of early twentieth century artists, he draws on Jacques Derrida's work, *The Ear of the Other*<sup>63</sup> and argues that at the centre of the "cross-cultural interactionism" represented by the use of Maori motifs, is a kind of "mutual appropriation", a "radically cross-cultural bricolage"<sup>64</sup> that works both ways.<sup>65</sup> In his view, the issue of Pakeha using Maori motifs or language is not the same as Picasso's appropriation of African masks. As New Zealanders, he states, "Pakeha actually live in the originary site of the appropriated object" and the sense of "contiguity and overlap" between Maori and Pakeha is therefore quite different in many ways than the American, English or French.<sup>66</sup> As well as this:

The politics are differently inflected, and the simple uncritical importing of an American argument debate will not do to describe them. Nor will a simple moralism do, that typically small-town-mind kind of fundamentalism, which turns a complex intellectual debate into a merely accusatory matter, relying on simple and transcendentalist oppositions, in which people are divided, in the fear-filled space so created, into evil and good. The fact that...a Maori too can be a primitivist consumer of African art, and from this modernist primitivist relation to African art, discover a way to situate himself in a modernist relation to 'traditional' Maori art, the earlier art of his own race – should serve to warn of the actual complexity of these matters, a complicity to which simple binary opposition and Manichean moralism are in no way sufficient.<sup>67</sup>

Pound argues then that in New Zealand this process of borrowing is a dynamic one that works both ways and suggests that instead of reading of the early 'appropriations' of artists such as Theo Schoon, Gordon Walters, Knight Turner and Colin McCahon as contributing to the 'oblivion' and 'death' of Maori culture that they should be understood "in their original context, [as] at once an aid and sympathetic response to the Maori

<sup>62</sup> Francis Pound, *The Space Between: Pakeha Use of Maori Motifs in Modernist New Zealand Art* (Auckland: Workshop Press, 1994).

<sup>63</sup> Jacques Derrida and Christie V. McDonald, *Oreille De L'autre: The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985).

<sup>64</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss explores the concept of bricolage in *The Savage Mind*. The French term 'bricoleur' has no ready equivalent in English. Strauss describes a bricoleur as: "a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man...he is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project...the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials that is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions." Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 17.

<sup>65</sup> Pound, 1994, p. 159.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

situation”.<sup>68</sup> He recommends that today these works be read “in the space, and as a *response* to that space, of a present, vividly alive, and increasingly self assertive Maori politic”.<sup>69</sup> Hamish Keith singles out Gordon Walters work as an example of going beyond “mere borrowing” and of having an “originality that defied later criticisms of cultural appropriation”.<sup>70</sup> Walters said of this period in his art: “Looking back I now realise what I was doing (though not consciously) was making a social and political statement. If you like, a *different* kind of nationalism.”<sup>71</sup> Perkins articulated a similar intention in his interest in Maori art in the 1920s.

Beyond the La Trobe Scheme, a broader national interest in Maori art was reflected in the founding of a Maori Arts and Crafts Institute in Rotorua in 1926, after the passing of an act of parliament titled, ‘An Act to Encourage the Dissemination of Knowledge of Maori Arts and Crafts.’ In addition, when the regulations relating to Native Schools were revised in 1931 they included scope for “such modifications as the Director of Education approved”.<sup>72</sup> Subsequently, under the direction of Douglas Ball, Inspector of Maori Schools, teachers were encouraged by the Department to introduce Maori art and craft such as weaving, dance, poi, taniko work and carving into all native schools.<sup>73</sup>

The magazine *Art in New Zealand* devoted its November 1929 issue to Maori art. In an article titled *The Art Craftmanship of the Maori*, James Cowan writes that the purpose of the Maori Arts and Crafts institute was to, “[s]how the country the way to a very wide application of native art principles to the needs of architectural and decorative work, European as well as Maori.”<sup>74</sup> However, for young Maori artists interested in modern art at this time, the institute offered a restricted and traditional model, one which artist Arnold Wilson referred to as “a template of what was done before 1840”.<sup>75</sup> It was under the auspices of the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education in the late 1940s and

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-161.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Keith, 2007, p. 203.

<sup>71</sup> Walters comment was prompted by his reading Francis Pound, Pound, 1994, p. 55.

<sup>72</sup> John Barrington, *Separate but Equal? Maori Schools and the Crown 1867-1969* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2008).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>74</sup> James Cowan, “The Art Craftmanship of the Maori,” *Art in New Zealand*, December 1929.

<sup>75</sup> Keith, 2007, p. 201.

1950s, and the leadership of Gordon Tovey that a new generation of young Maori artists would begin to reinvent their art in a modern context.<sup>76</sup>

Viewed against the background of modernist European practice in early twentieth-century Europe, the La Trobe teachers' interest in Maori art reflected that of many nineteenth century artists such as Paul Gauguin, in 'primitive' societies. At the centre of the aesthetic tradition of primitivism in its earliest and most archetypal expression, was the belief in the necessity of return to origins and the "superiority of a simple life close to nature".<sup>77</sup> Within the context of the European artistic tradition, the concept of 'primitive' has been used in a positive utopian sense, as well as in a pejorative sense. The 'primitive' ideal of the essential purity of 'uncivilised' life is present in the Romantic philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and in the well-established traditions of pastoralism in the work of Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). The derogatory view, fuelled by pseudo-Darwinian notions of evolution, saw the art of colonised people "as evidence of their barbaric uncivilised nature, of their lack of cultural progress".<sup>78</sup>

The publication of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* in 1918 had a profound influence on Tovey who felt that "Western civilization had become over-intellectualised and that the natural wellsprings of innate drives had dried up."<sup>79</sup> Tovey saw art as offering a way through which this imbalance could be rectified. In the same sense, he viewed the development of Maori art and crafts in schools as the means to an end:

With Maori children it is not sufficient to develop the Maori side alone, nor is it with Pakeha sufficient to foster the European side only. We should aim at expanding attitudes common to both groups, to develop further understanding and allowing them opportunities for further development by blending the cultural strengths of the Maori and European.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Richard Heinberg, "The Primitivist Critique of Civilization," <http://www.primitivism.com/primitivist-critique.htm>.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gillian Perry, *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 1993), p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> C. Henderson, *A Blaze of Colour - Gordon Tovey: Artist Educator* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1998), p. 55.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 168.



Perkins, too, viewed art as providing a medium for a kind of ‘utopian harmonising’ of the two cultures, which might reconcile the different philosophies in a form that was “at once functionalist/modernist and Maori”.<sup>81</sup>

Hamish Keith concludes that while La Trobe’s idea of recruiting art teachers from Britain could have been a “disastrous mistake” there were “a number of gifted painters whose influence would be largely benign or even positive”.<sup>82</sup> It is clear that despite the slightly paternal ‘enlightening intent’ of the La Trobe Scheme, it would be misleading to suggest that Perkins and other La Trobe teachers saw themselves simply as cultural ambassadors, for it is evident that in most cases, they came with a genuine desire to witness, facilitate and savour, as artists, a distinctly New Zealand art.

### *The La Trobe Artists’ Interest in Child Art*

Field and Hipkins shared an interest in child art. The child art movement was in some ways a natural continuation of the scientific child study movement of the 1880s. Child art was viewed as offering a window through which to better understand child nature.<sup>83</sup> In 1933-34 Field took leave to visit schools in England and was captivated by the work of Franz Cizek, Roger Fry and Marion Richardson who were at the forefront of the movement at this time. Cizek (1865-1946), an Austrian painter and art teacher, was one of the first to promote the idea of children’s artwork being proper “art” that possessed aesthetic qualities worthy of serious consideration in its own right. The turn away from the copyist pre-vocational curriculum of the South Kensington model towards a focus on the child’s natural self-expression and imagination had great appeal to Field. In particular, he was struck by Cizek’s teaching method, which was based on a belief in the importance of “not teaching,” but of providing the materials and an environment in which the children could develop their work individually. Field saw this approach as being similar to his own style and teaching methods at King Edward Technical College, which was viewed by others as both ‘eccentric’ and ‘radical’.<sup>84</sup> On his return, Field requested permission from

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<sup>81</sup> Pound, 1994, p. 72.

<sup>82</sup> Keith, 2007, p. 140.

<sup>83</sup> A. D. Efland, *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), p. 195.

<sup>84</sup> Petersen, 1989, p. 31; Bell, in Hardie, 2005, p. 98.

the Director of Education to visit primary schools in the Dunedin area and teach Cizek's methods.<sup>85</sup>

It is likely that Tovey was introduced to Cizek's work through Field or through Celia Drummond, a young teacher on Tovey's staff who had seen Cizek at the School of Applied Art in Vienna. Drummond found an ally in Tovey, who was interested in Cizek's methods and enjoyed trying out new ideas.<sup>86</sup> Tovey rapidly embraced Cizek's principles and used them as a basis for his own practice of child-centred art education, first at the College and then later as National Supervisor of Art and Craft.

Although Tovey had a strong background in commercial art and design, the fact that he was not a trained teacher and did not hold qualifications from an art school and yet won the position of Head of the Art Department in 1936 ruffled feathers amongst some of the other teachers who were more qualified and found working with him challenging.<sup>87</sup> Tovey's appointment was backed by W. G. Aldridge, the college principal, who saw him as a contentious appointment but as someone with the capacity to be a charismatic and innovative leader, attributes Tovey demonstrated both in this context and in his position of National Supervisor of Art and Craft which he was to take up in 1946.<sup>88</sup> Under Tovey's leadership the emphasis in the King Edward Technical College shifted towards what Edgar and Field regarded as a 'more primary school attitude' as Tovey turned away from the traditional South Kensington model, deeming it inappropriate for the New Zealand context.<sup>89</sup> Tovey believed that "the enforcement and lauding of any one particular technique [was] the death knell of the art of any country" a view that was increasingly adopted by art historians, curators and critics.<sup>90</sup> An important consequence of this, and one that was to have future ramifications for the development of art and craft education in the primary school under Tovey was that craftsmanship in the traditional sense began to be viewed as a weakness rather than strength.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Petersen, 1989, p. 31. (It is not known if Field went on to do this or not).

<sup>86</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 60.

<sup>87</sup> Petersen, 1989, pp. 34-35.

<sup>88</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 57.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 1998, p. 57; also Bell in Hardie, 2000, p. 25.

<sup>90</sup> Henderson 1998, p. 94; Macdonald Ross, 2006, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> McDonald Ross, 2006, p. 7.

Unlike some of his contemporaries Tovey was well informed about modernist movements in Europe such as Bauhaus, Dada and Surrealism and was skilled at refashioning new ideas to suit his own beliefs.<sup>92</sup> Instead of offering art classes only to gifted children as Cizek did, Tovey made art classes available to all students, irrespective of ability. Strongly influenced by Carl Jung's theory of innate universal psychic dispositions and Gestalt psychology, Tovey believed that all students had an inherent ability in visual, feeling, movement and sound expression as well as different personality types which were revealed in their drawings. He devised a scheme based on a simple drawing test whereby children were sorted into groups based on their abilities in these areas.<sup>93</sup> Using a stagecraft project, Tovey ran an innovative integrated programme of instruction for students at the college which was based on children's aptitudes in three areas. Students in a visual group worked on scenery design, costume design and model making, while those who favoured sound worked on sound production, music, acting and lecturing, and the kinetic group produced a ballet explaining Ostwald's colour theory.<sup>94</sup>

In his essay "Toveyism in Perspective", David Bell observes that by the time Tovey left the College in Dunedin [in 1945]:

...His particular fusion of ideas into policy was really quite well developed. It marked a radical break from art education thinking in New Zealand before the 1940s and it opened the way for twenty-five years of innovative and energetic art education in New Zealand.<sup>95</sup>

As an educational policy designed to modernise educational practice in arts education, the critical edge of the La Trobe Scheme lay in the fact that it was conceived and administered under the auspices of 'technical education', which was anchored squarely in the field of applied art. The new subjects introduced as a result of the Manual and Technical Education Act of 1900 led to a blurring of the division between 'drawing' and 'handcraft', which resulted in the gradual shift to the more open designation, 'art and crafts'. In similar fashion, the La Trobe Scheme represented an important early step in challenging the

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<sup>92</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 59.

<sup>93</sup> Petersen, 1989, p. 34.

<sup>94</sup> Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932) a Nobel-prize winning scientist spent many years working to find a scientific basis for the perceived harmony of colours. His book *The Colour Primer* published in 1916 went through 15 editions. Dutch Painter Piet Mondrian was particularly influenced by his theory. In August 1938, the *New Zealand Education Gazette* featured an advertisement for "powder tempera colours for the art lesson" which were available "in the Ostwald colours as well as a range of 21 other tints" (p.151). On Tovey's program at King Edward Technical College see also Henderson, 1998, pp. 61-62; Petersen, 1989, p. 34.

<sup>95</sup> See Hardie, 2005, p. 97.

distinctions between fine art and applied art. The La Trobe Scheme also created a seeding ground for new ideas in art education, most notably in terms of the teachers' interest in Maori art, printmaking and child art, ideas that were to enter the primary school curriculum through the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme, and the work of specialist advisors in the Art and Craft Branch in the 1950s and 1960s.

### ***Progressivism and the New Education in the 1920s and 1930s***

In New Zealand the drive for reform in education coincided with Hogben's term as Inspector-General and, as a result, Ewing believes, "moved faster and further under his direction that might otherwise have been the case".<sup>96</sup> Hogben was a strong proponent of progressive ideas and during his term (1899-1915) his annual reports were infused with references to the 'the spirit of the new education' and to the doctrines of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey. Progressivism was a humanitarian movement that began in the 1870s in the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom. Progressive reforms arose in response to the new urban industrial society and included a range of social, cultural, moral, economic and political movements. These included efforts to regulate child labour, improve working conditions, address health hazards and civil rights, eliminate corruption in government and secure the right of women to vote.<sup>97</sup>

In Lawrence Cremin's history of progressivism in American Education, *The Transformation of the School* (1964), he points out that 'progressive education' is actually "the educational phase of American Progressivism writ large. In effect, progressive education began as Progressivism in education: a many sided effort to use the schools to improve the lives of individuals."<sup>98</sup> In education, Cremin explains, the progressive movement meant several things:

First, it meant broadening the program and function of the school to include a direct concern for health, vocation and the quality of family and community life.

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<sup>96</sup> Ewing, *The Development of the New Zealand Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970*, p. 148.

<sup>97</sup> Lewis L Gould., *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914*, (Pearson Educational Ltd., 2001), p. 39.

<sup>98</sup> L Cremin, A., *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. viii.

Second, it meant applying in the classroom the pedagogical principles derived from new scientific research in psychology and the social sciences.

Third, it meant tailoring instruction more and more to the different kinds and classes of children who were being brought within the purview of the school.<sup>99</sup>

The term 'new education' pre-dated the formation of the New Education Fellowship (NEF) and was widely used by educators (including Dewey) from the turn of the twentieth century to refer to educational progressivism.<sup>100</sup> The Great War provided a catalyst for the formation of the New Education Fellowship in England in 1921. The NEF was the focal organisation for the new education, a social movement that repeated many of the child-centred doctrines of the nineteenth century progressive educators but added a more internationalist focus with the explicit agenda of educating for peace. The NEF was founded by a group of educationalists working in England, Germany and Switzerland who felt the need for an independent body to bring together national movements of educational reform to provide a forum for the discussion of new ideas and methods.<sup>101</sup> The headquarters were in London and branches were established in many countries with a group of five countries initially providing the leadership: Great Britain, the United States, France, Germany and Switzerland. The NEF described itself as "an international organisation for everyone who is interested in better methods of education".<sup>102</sup> The broad aim of the NEF was to:

Further educational improvement and reform throughout the world so that every individual – whatever his nationality, race, status or religion – shall be educated under conditions which allow for the full and harmonious development of his development of his whole personality,

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> John Darling, *Child-Centred Education and Its Critics* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1994), p. 33.

<sup>101</sup> Dates for the establishment of the NEF vary. Campbell (1938, p. 497) gives 1915 as the founding date, while Skidelsky (1969, p. 141) states it was 1920. *The New Era*, the magazine of the NEF, gives the date as 1921. The confusion probably arises from the fact that the genesis of the NEF organisation was in 1915, when the founder, Beatrice Ensor, decided to form a group of progressive teachers within the Theosophical Society who would "take as the basis of their work faith in the spiritual powers latent in every child, powers which if released could create a new world where all might find true happiness". See W Boyd and Rawson W, *The Story of the New Education* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1965). pp. 67-70. This group became the 'Fraternity in Education' and held its annual meetings within the conferences of 'The New Ideals in Education.' Because of the fast growth of this new group, the Fraternity in Education decided to organise a new conference "with a view to creating an international body for the promotion of world peace through education" (Boyd, p. 69). This was held in Calais in August 1921 with the theme of "The Creative Self-Expression of the Child," and is generally regarded as the founding date of the NEF organisation.

<sup>102</sup> Roger Gal, "Where Does the New Education Stand?" *The New Era in Home and School* 42, no. 3 (1961), p. 65.

and lead to his realizing and fulfilling his responsibilities to the community.<sup>103</sup>

A declaration in *The New Era in Home and School* magazine, (the mouthpiece of the British NEF), stated that the NEF “believes that the spread of education throughout the world is essential to the creation of real understanding between nations of differing culture and is therefore a means to the establishment of enduring peace”.<sup>104</sup> The spectre of a future war with Russia led many people to join the new education movement with the explicit aim of preventing war through education. In the 1920s, news of the NEF reached New Zealand through a small number of educators and individual enthusiasts who subscribed to *The New Era* magazine and through those who had travelled abroad on Carnegie Scholarships.<sup>105</sup>

### **Progressivism in New Zealand Primary Schools**

The liberalising spirit of Hogben’s educational reforms continued under J A Hanan, Minister of Education from 1915 to 1919, who encouraged inspectors in various education boards to support teachers to experiment with new methods. Hanan wrote in a 1916 Memorandum that “the claims made for formal, abstract, unapplied study – that it provides good mental discipline and culture transferable to other activities – is now fighting in the last ditch all the world over.”<sup>106</sup>

There was considerable interest in new educational ideas from abroad in New Zealand during the 1920s, despite its isolation. Some education boards provided newsletters, study notes and recordings on various new education methods.<sup>107</sup> The Wanganui Education Board, for example, strongly supported the development of Montessori programmes, and by 1921 reported that “some measure of auto-education based chiefly on Montessori methods and material is in use in practically all the schools of the district”.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Jane Abbiss, “The “New Education Fellowship” In New Zealand: Its Activity and Influence in the 1930s and 1940s,” *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 33, no. 1 (1998), p. 82.

<sup>104</sup> *New Education Fellowship*, Vol 42, no 3, March 1961, p. 65.

<sup>105</sup> Abbiss, 1998, p. 84.

<sup>106</sup> See J. A. Hanan, A Memorandum by the Minister Dealing with some Phases of Educational Progress and Reviewing Existing Conditions in the Light of National Requirements, *AJHR*, 1916, E-14. Cited in Roger Openshaw and John David McKenzie, eds., *Reinterpreting the Educational Past: Essays in the History of New Zealand Education*, Educational Research Series (Wellington: NZCER, 1987), p. 183.

<sup>107</sup> Ewing, *The Development of the New Zealand Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970*, pp. 154-155.

<sup>108</sup> Betsy Miltich-Conway and Roger Openshaw, “The Montessori Method in the Wanganui Education Board District 1911-1924”, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 33, no. 1 (1988), p. 194.

The Wanganui Education Board also adopted the Dalton Plan, a method of individualised education developed by Helen Parkhurst. Parkhurst was an American teacher who split from Montessori to create her own method based on the development of children's individual talents.<sup>109</sup> As well, the Board provided teachers with suggestions for using William Kilpatrick's 'project method'. Kilpatrick, a student of John Dewey, based his method upon Dewey's theme of 'purposeful activity' and developed an approach based upon projects in the children's interests.<sup>110</sup> Also in Wanganui, a Quaker school known as The Friend's School was opened in 1920 and ran until 1969 with a total of 1450 students attending over these years. The school was run by Frank Moreton who had been teaching in a school in England where the Dalton plan was in use. The students were encouraged to manage their own affairs through their own elected committees and a common council and the school had a policy of no corporal punishment.<sup>111</sup>

Progressive influences also came through the University departments of education and training colleges.<sup>112</sup> W. Gould professor of education at Victoria from 1927-1946, R. Lawrence of Otago, Frank Lopdell, Principal of Wellington Teachers' College and James Shelley of Canterbury were all strong proponents of progressive education.

Shelley, who had arrived in New Zealand from Britain in 1920 to take up the Chair of Education at Canterbury University College had a keen interest in adult education and was active in the Worker's Education Association (WEA) directing the first summer schools. He later became Director of Broadcasting under Fraser's Labour Government, founded the National Orchestra and became president of the Open-air Schools League.<sup>113</sup> Beeby, who studied under Shelley, recalled his enormous influence:

There was all the Freudian psychology and all the psychology that went with it. He came full of these ideas. He didn't know much about classroom practice and he never went near a school, but he knew the theory. He brought new life to education in New Zealand. He is the

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>110</sup> Darling, 1994, p. 29. Selleck writes that in the 1920s there were approximately 1500 English schools using the Dalton Plan and about 200 in USA: R. J. W. Selleck, *English Primary Education and the Progressives 1914-1939* (London: Routledge and Kegan, Paul, 1972), p. 39.

<sup>111</sup> Frances Menefy and Malcolm Douglass, *A History of the New Zealand Friends School Wanganui 1920-1969* (Christchurch: Malcolm Douglass 1969), p. 44-45.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Prebble, "Strategies of Change: A Study of Some Aspects of New Zealand Education During the First Half of the Directorship of Dr. C. E. Beeby, 1940-1949" (M.A thesis, University of Auckland, 1970), p. 15.

<sup>113</sup> Radio Talk on Sir James Shelley by C E Beeby, Alexander Turnbull Library, 98-074-6/2.

person who affected me. It took ages before it affected classrooms, but it certainly affected us as students in 1921.<sup>114</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, it was common for training college students to take education papers at universities in New Zealand in their first year. The most influential textbook of these years, used in every training college and university, was Percy Nunn's *Education, its Data and First Principles* (1920). Nunn's book put the ideas and practices of educational reformers such as Homer Lane, Montessori, Holmes, Simpson and MacMunn into a theoretical framework that was both considered and accessible. It went through fourteen reprints before it was revised and expanded in 1930, and another nine by 1941.<sup>115</sup> Nunn's book is regarded by many as the most influential book of the period, which shaped the outlook and practice of a generation of teachers.<sup>116</sup> The second most frequently prescribed text of the period was John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916).<sup>117</sup> Other influential set texts included, William James *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* (1892), Boyd H Bode's *Modern Educational Theories* (1927) and Susan Isaacs *The Children We Teach* (1935).<sup>118</sup>

Also influential was Norman MacMunn's, *The Child's Path to Freedom* (1914), to which Nunn wrote the preface. MacMunn, advocated for a new kind of schoolmaster, one who would be "modest, patient, a scientific observer and friend of his pupils".<sup>119</sup> He made a number of recommendations in his book such as the establishment of a Department of Research and Experiment at the Board of Education, and for a permanent display of children's creative work, teaching apparatus and education toys in London. A. S Neill's books were also influential and for many people became the incarnation of the new education.<sup>120</sup>

As well as the universities and training colleges progressive ideas also came from individual educationalists such as Frank Livingstone Combs, President of the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) in 1927 and 1936, who published numerous articles

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<sup>114</sup> Beeby cited in Sue Middleton and Helen May, *Teachers Talk Teaching, 1915-1995: Early Childhood, Schools and Teachers' Colleges* (Palmerston North, N.Z.: Dunmore Press, 1997), pp. 174-175.

<sup>115</sup> Selleck, 1972, p. 47.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Prebble, 1970, p. 47.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>119</sup> Boyd, 1965, p. 64.

<sup>120</sup> Interviews: June Melser, Doreen Blumhardt, Merv Holland, Peter Smith.



in the organisation's journal *National Education* criticising traditional teaching methods.<sup>121</sup>

### *The 1929 Syllabus of Instruction*

How shall he give kindling in whose own inward man there is no live  
coal, but all is burnt to a dead grammatical order? – Carlyle<sup>122</sup>

With Carlyle's mournful question and a dig at John Locke, the introduction to the 144 page appendices of the 1929 *Syllabus of Instruction for Primary Schools* opens with a mild chiding for teachers still clinging to old ways:

There still survives in the schools a great deal of the old fashioned formalism that regarded education as more a mechanical process than a means of securing for every child the fullest possible spiritual, mental and physical development. It is hoped that the present syllabus will give encouragement to those teachers – and fortunately there are many of them – who regard the child not as inanimate clay in the hands of a potter or as an empty vessel sent to them for filling, but as a soul, a personality, capable of being developed and trained for the wider service of humanity.<sup>123</sup>

The new Syllabus gazetted in 1929, commonly known as 'the Red Book' because of its red binding, was a remarkably progressive document. The introduction proper states that its aim was to modernise the 1919 syllabus in view of the "very marked changes ...in educational thought with respect to school organisation and curricula"<sup>124</sup> that had taken place over the preceding decade. Although many of the prescriptions in the 1929 syllabus remained much the same as the 1919 syllabus, the general introduction and many of appendices captured the liberal mood of the post-war new education.<sup>125</sup> The Great War had fractured the idealistic vision carried by English-born reforming politicians like Richard Seddon (1893-1906) that "New Zealand could avoid England's mistakes while maintaining its virtues."<sup>126</sup> The economic recession that followed the War contributed to

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<sup>121</sup> Ewing, 1970, p. 155.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *From Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh*, Published by Chapman and Hall, 1831, (in three books), Book II, p. 84. Original from the University of California, Digitized 5 Mar 2007.

<sup>123</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, "Syllabus of Instruction for Primary Schools," ed. Education (Wellington: Government Printer, 1928), p. 63.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> Ewing, 1970, p. 183.

<sup>126</sup> Terry Hearn, "English - Values," in *Te Ara - Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* (Wellington: Ministry for Culture and Heritage).

the implosion of rosy colonial views of New Zealand as “God’s own country”, and “the better Britain of the South”. The downturn seemed to coincide with a change in focus from colonial idealism, to a preoccupation amongst some artists and writers with questions of a national identity.<sup>127</sup>

In education, the war led to a surge in the teaching of patriotism and citizenship in schools. Character training became an increasingly important subject and emphasis was placed on obedience and conformity in students, qualities that were viewed as critical for solidarity in the face of external threat.<sup>128</sup> In 1922, the Government made it compulsory for all teachers to sign an oath of loyalty to the Crown and recommended that a ceremony of flag saluting be carried out in all schools on a regular basis.<sup>129</sup>

The new syllabus had a distinctly New Zealand emphasis. It was the first to apply to Native schools.<sup>130</sup> While it was still fairly minimal, it also introduced New Zealand history and stories connected to Maori culture for the first time, and emphasised the importance of every child knowing “something of the history of their own town, district and province”.<sup>131</sup> It allowed teachers considerable freedom to select and rearrange material in accordance with their own ideas and to either “transfer a subject from one class to another” or to base their “instruction on one subject to which all or most of the others are related.”<sup>132</sup> Ewing observes that “teachers reading the Red Book in later years were often astonished at its liberal spirit and some parts are still quoted with approval.”<sup>133</sup> The introduction to the syllabus stated:

The Department particularly desires that the present syllabus shall be regarded both by inspectors and teachers as mainly suggestive. Teachers are to consider themselves free to make any alteration or rearrangement of the work they think desirable, and the inspectors will approve any reasonable scheme that appears to meet the needs of children of a particular type or of a particular locality. It is not necessary that the teacher should follow the order of instruction adopted in the syllabus...part of the duty of the teacher will be to select and rearrange

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<sup>127</sup> Rather than embellishment, Simpson observes, the artistic emphasis was on “a bitter realism, stripping land and people bare.” 1998, p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> Roger Openshaw, “Patriotism and the New Zealand Primary School: The Decisive Years of the Twenties” (PhD thesis, University of Waikato, 1978,) p. 235.

<sup>129</sup> Ewing, 1970, p. 169.

<sup>130</sup> From 1858-1947 schools for Maori youth were called Native Schools; thereafter they were known as Maori Schools.

<sup>131</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, “*Syllabus of Instruction for Primary Schools*”, p. 30.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ewing, 1970, pp. 183-184.

the material in accordance with his own ideas as to the best method of teaching the subject.<sup>134</sup>

The Red book's Bibliography listed some 638 texts, and recommended a number of writers on new progressive educational methods. These included Helen Parkhurst on the Dalton Plan, Kirkpatrick, Bode and Dewey (four texts), as well as writers on Montessori and other child-centred methods.

### **Drawing and Handwork in the 1929 Syllabus**

In the decades leading up to the 1929 Syllabus, there was little progress in the development of art education. Although syllabuses in subjects such as history, arithmetic, music and physical training, had been revised in the years between the 1919 Syllabus and the 1929 Syllabus, drawing and handwork remained largely unaltered since Hogben's revised syllabus in 1913. Chief Inspector T. B. Strong's 1925 report, for instance, gives a fairly dismal appraisal of the state of art and craft, still referred to as drawing and handwork in schools:<sup>135</sup>

... In our schools the study of English literature is hampered by the slavish adherence to the technicalities of grammar, our arithmetic is in too many cases divorced from the practical and the actual affairs of life, our cultural subjects are treated by some as "frills," and our handwork is still devoid of aim...In very few schools can it be said that drawing is good or even satisfactory. In general, the instruction is not skilful, the objects are not well chosen or carefully graded ... No other subject in the curriculum is so calculated to develop good taste, yet in even otherwise good schools, much of the drawing is very crude and destitute of any artistic value. The scope of the treatment is too limited; little opportunity is afforded the child of expressing its own view of what it sees, still more infrequently does one find a pupil being allowed to develop his natural bent. If a boy shows a bent as a comic artist a cartoonist, a landscape painter or a designer (e.g., of linoleum or wall-paper patterns), why would he be denied the exercise of his art? An art training does not consist simply in drawing in outline a bucket or a broom. Some formal instruction there must be, but it should not, as it is at present, be restrictive; it should be imparted to teach the principles underlying the art. If true education consists in revealing to the pupil the powers that lie latent within him and encouraging the development of

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<sup>134</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, "*Syllabus of Instruction for Primary Schools*", p. 5.

<sup>135</sup> T B Strong became Director of Education in 1927. Before he became Chief Inspector of Primary Schools in 1920 he was a teacher and an inspector.

these powers, then the teaching of drawing must be considered at present ineffective.<sup>136</sup>

Drawing in this syllabus was divided into:

Free drawing of natural or fashioned objects; imaginative drawing, mainly for purposes of illustration; decoration, covering instrumental drawing; practical geometry and design for craft work of various kinds suitable for execution in the class-room or school workshop including lettering and illuminating; and art appreciation.<sup>137</sup>

Although the 1929 drawing prescriptions remained substantially the same as the 1913 Syllabus, the introduction of imaginative and illustrative work and art appreciation in the 1929 syllabus was new. In a radical departure from the technical emphasis on drawing, teachers were urged to introduce the study of reproductions of “primitive pictures and paintings from...Persia, India and China”<sup>138</sup> which would demonstrate to students that “perspective and photographic reality are not really essential”.<sup>139</sup> In handwork, the crafts of toy making, leatherwork and basketry were also introduced.

However, despite the extensive and considered appendices, drawing instruction remained imitative, formalised and largely technical. Free drawing, for instance, in the new syllabus, consisted of the teacher placing a real object such as a bucket on a table for the children to observe and then removing this from view so that the children could draw ‘freely’ from memory. Prior to this children would study the drawing of an object by the teacher on the blackboard and then try to draw this ‘freely’ themselves from memory once it was removed. Collinge writes:

Although the Red Book encouraged pupils’ self-expression and asked teachers to develop individuality, the prevailing concept was an adult one. There was precious little recognition of psychological development, the emphasis was primarily on skill, and the results were not regarded in any real sense as art.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *AJHR*, E-2, 1925, p. 44.

<sup>137</sup> Department of Education, 1928, p. 194.

<sup>138</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, “*Syllabus of Instruction for Primary Schools*.” p. 189.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>140</sup> Collinge in Thorburn, 1978, p. 16.

Ewing suggests that had the proficiency exam been abolished in 1929, the new syllabus would have given an impressive lead to the school.<sup>141</sup> As it was, the continued existence of this examination, combined with the large classes in most schools (often up to 70 pupils), meant that new approaches such as Montessori, the Dalton Plan, the project method and other methods made little lasting impact on the traditional methods of instruction.<sup>142</sup>

The 1929 syllabus is a portrait of an education system in transition – a halfway document, which captures the humanist sentiment of the ‘new education,’ while simultaneously negating it in the machinations of an inhospitable examination system.

### ***The New Education Fellowship and the New Zealand Conference***

Change in art education might have continued at a somewhat slower pace in New Zealand than abroad had Australia not been selected as the venue for the 1937 New Education Fellowship conference. Under a newly-elected Labour government committed to social reform, Peter Fraser, Minister of Education (and Prime Minister from 1940), arranged for fourteen of the delegates to detour to New Zealand in July and present a series of conferences around the country. In collaboration with Beeby, then Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) and supported by the Australian Council For Educational Research, arrangements were made for the visitors to travel to all of the main city centres. Schools were closed for the week-long sessions of the conference so that teachers and members of the public could attend. Beeby recalls:

The sessions in the four centres had all the enthusiasm of a religious revival meeting, and created a professional and public wave of feeling for education that has never been equalled before or since. The NZCER, in its Carnegie cockle-shell, rode the wave.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> The proficiency was a six-hour exam for students at the end of standard six or form two, which assessed their ability in the core primary school subjects. Students who passed were entitled to free secondary education. Students' results in the exam significantly influenced the gradings inspectors awarded to teachers, which had the obvious effect of dampening their enthusiasm for innovation and experimentation.

<sup>142</sup> Ewing, 1970, p.158. See also, Miltich-Conway pp. 197-199. Here, the authors do not mention the effects of the proficiency exam but argue that the failure of Montessori in New Zealand state schools was partially due to the fact that these programmes were “harnessed to what educators believed to be desirable social and economic goals and were rapidly discarded as more attractive options became available.”

<sup>143</sup> Beeby, “The Beginnings of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research: Reminiscences of C.E. Beeby at the Jubilee Dinner, (New Zealand Council for Educational Research 50th Anniversary Dinner).” 1984, p. 10.

Nearly 6000 people attended the conference, which was widely advertised and broadcast on radio. At some of the more popular lectures, people were turned away from halls that accommodated three thousand people.<sup>144</sup> Beeby said of this time, “[n]ever before or since have teachers, parents and public studied education together with such passion. Some of the sessions had the flavour of the old-fashioned Methodist revival meetings ...”<sup>145</sup> He writes that the conference offered:

... An almost unbelievable opportunity to catch up with the thinking of the outside world. And it came at a most opportune time, as we emerged from the Depression, which had scarred New Zealand even more deeply than the Great War. We were left with an abiding sense of guilt towards the young, who had suffered in both war and times of want, and here were experts offering us ways of making reparation to the next generation.<sup>146</sup>

Although the Labour Government had already begun to initiate significant reform before the NEF conference such as universal secondary education, a compulsory core curriculum and the abolition of the Proficiency Examination in 1937, the sheer scope and intensity of innovation in art and crafts education following the NEF conference suggest that this event was a powerful catalyst for educational reform. Fraser announced that the NEF conference “marked the commencement of an educational renaissance of which much will come”.<sup>147</sup> This was echoed by Beeby who described the NEF conference as “a new venture that was to mark a turning point in New Zealand education and, incidentally to alter the whole course of my life and my thinking on education”.<sup>148</sup> Ewing writes that the conference helped to revive the essentially liberal spirit of the Red Book, which was no longer subordinated to the demands of the Proficiency Examination.<sup>149</sup>

### **Progressivism and the New Education in Art**

The New Zealand NEF conference generated huge national interest in progressive educational ideas and introduced the revolutionary idea of ‘education through art.’ The belief that art should have a central place in the curriculum was strongly promoted by Canadian painter and educationalist Arthur Lismer and endorsed by the lectures of Paul L.

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<sup>144</sup> Campbell, 1938, p. xiii.

<sup>145</sup> Beeby, 1992, p.106.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>149</sup> Ewing, 1970, p. 194.

Dengler, editor of *The New Education in Austria* and Harold Rugg, Professor of Education at Columbia University.<sup>150</sup> Lismer's address titled 'Art in a Changing World' had a simple but radical message – that 'art education was the necessary basis for all education.'<sup>151</sup> He argued that, "[a]rt should be brought into the arena of active life, of experience lived and shared" and warned against "the danger of the acquisition of skills that have no purpose".<sup>152</sup> Dengler's lecture, 'Child Art in Austria,' focussed on Cizek and his work with gifted children at the School of Applied Art in Vienna.

Cremin points out that although Dewey saw "the crux of progressive education in its connection with social reformism", many progressive educators, "found their insight in its tie with the historic battle of the artist against the superficiality and commercialism of industrial civilization".<sup>153</sup> For the more child-centred progressives, he suggests, "[t]he key to the modern creative revolution ... was the triumph of self-expression in education, as well as in art; hence in creative self-expression they found the quintessential meaning of the progressive education movement."<sup>154</sup> Lismer for example, said in his NEF address:

...[T]he child is nearly all artist and ...the art way, or the creative path, is the one that leads to the discovery of personality. Design is growth, and through design man approaches divinity and sustained spiritual and physical well being. Man is most like God when he creates from ideas and imagination things and objects that live in the world of man as living truth ...Life itself is a work of art; life passes, and art endures. Art is the most continuous and convincing picture of the manifestation of divinity in humankind.<sup>155</sup>

The new education proponents took up Dewey's conception of *life as growth*, and seemed to tilt it on its axis to advance the belief that man was at his most sacred when he creates.

The idea of art as the manifestation of divinity in humanity was not new, but as a metaphor for educational reform it fits seamlessly with the new education's faith in creative self-expression.<sup>156</sup> Rugg and Schumaker argued in *The Child-Centered School*:

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<sup>150</sup> Rugg's lecture was titled "Education and Social Progress in the 'New' Industrial Democratic Countries".

<sup>151</sup> Campbell, 1938, pp. 217, 224.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>153</sup> Cremin, 1964, p. 183.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Campbell, 1938, pp. 217, 224.

<sup>156</sup> Efland, 1990, p. 193.

To comprehend the significance of the child-centered schools, one would need, indeed, to understand the attempts of the creative artist to break through the thick crust of imitation, superficiality, and commercialism which bound the arts almost throughout the first three centuries of industrialism.<sup>157</sup>

Private progressive schools such as Caroline Pratt's Play School in Greenwich Village, New York catered to the children of artists and writers who were eager to experiment with creative education. Pratt viewed all of the children at her school as artists, "each with an intense desire to express or externalize what he had seen, heard, felt, each with his own personal perception of reality".<sup>158</sup> In 1925, The Francis Parker School in Chicago published a study on *Creative Effort*. Teachers wrote on the subjects of design, drawing, clay, rhythm and melody and expressed a common faith in the powers of self expression:

We presuppose that in varying degrees and with wide individual divergences and tendencies, all normal children have the right to live in a rich environment, to exercise to the full of their powers of expression and to have every avenue to their souls open and in use....Given freedom, children will create. This we say over and over.<sup>159</sup>

The following year, the Progressive Education Society's magazine *Progressive Education* devoted the April, May and June issues to the theme *The Creative Experience*. Art historian Frederick Logan, writes that "without doubt" the contributors to these "reached the pinnacle of optimistic certitude on the child and the arts...what past ages had not yet achieved might yet be possible".<sup>160</sup> American educator and poet Hugh Mearns, author of *Creative Youth* (1925) and *Creative Power* (1929), introduced the magazine series in a lead article titled "The Creative Spirit and its Significance for Education". In this he argued:

But adults are in the main wingless; convention, tribal taboos, mechanistic living, long years of schooling, something has stilled the spirit within or walled it securely. It is to the children we must go to see the creative spirit at its best; and only to those children who are in some measure uncoerced.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Harold Rugg, and Schumaker, Ann., *The Child-Centered School: An Appraisal of the New Education* (Chicago: World Book Company, 1928), cited in Efland, 1990, p.194.

<sup>158</sup> Cremin, 1964, p. 205.

<sup>159</sup> Fredrick M Logan, "Progressive Education, Creative Expression and Art Appreciation," *College Art Journal* 2, no. 4 (1952), p. 245.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.



Lisner argued that the outcome of this new freedom in natural impulses and creativity in schools would be “new concepts of personality, new ideals of beauty, peace, spiritual growth and freedom” in national and domestic life.<sup>162</sup> The surge of interest in the ideas of Cizek, and of art educators and critics such as Herbert Read in England and Viktor Lowenfeld at Pennsylvania State University throughout this decade, was due in large part to the fact that the new education insisted on the very principles they applied to art education.<sup>163</sup> Their philosophy was in harmony with the overarching faith of the new educators; the belief in the power of education to effect social reformation. With this belief, art, like the child, became almost sacred.

In *Exile's Return* a portrait of young writers living in Greenwich Village in the 1920s, Malcolm Cowley outlines the key principles that became a way of life for the social reformers:

...The idea of Salvation by the child. – Each of us at birth has special potentialities which are slowly crushed and destroyed by a standardised society and mechanical methods of teaching. If a new educational system can be introduced, one by which children are encouraged to develop their own personalities, to blossom freely like flowers, then the world will be saved by this new, free generation.

The idea of self-expression. – Each man's each woman's purpose in life is to express himself, to realise his full individuality through creative work and beautiful living in beautiful surroundings.

...The idea of liberty. – Every law, convention or rule of art that prevents self-expression of the full enjoyment of the moment should be shattered and abolished.

The idea of psychological adjustment. – We are unhappy because we are maladjusted, and maladjusted because we are repressed, if our individual repressions be removed – by expressing them to a Freudian psychologist then we can adjust ourselves to any situation....<sup>164</sup>

Cremin finds that during the 1920s the fascination of the intellectual avant-garde “with the arts in general and Freud in particular” shifted the emphasis of the new education to such a degree that the social reformism of the early progressive movement was, “virtually eclipsed by the rhetoric of child-centered pedagogy”.<sup>165</sup> Freud's theory of personality as

<sup>162</sup> See Lisner's address at the NZ NEF conference, Campbell, 1938, p. 232.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., pp. 236-237.

<sup>164</sup> Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (New York: Viking Press, 1964).

<sup>165</sup> Cremin, 1964, p. 181.

the product of childhood experiences and the unconscious mind as the source of human motivation was much in the minds and mouths of educators. Taken together with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious and interest in understanding the psyche through dreams, these theories appealed to progressive educators who believed that the creative urge was innate, but that it was suppressed by a one-sided emphasis on the intellect. The rise of fascism had demonstrated that obedience and conformity, previously esteemed educational values, could be mobilised to disastrous ends. Boyd finds that in the 1930s this led to a gradual "shift of interest from the individual child to society".<sup>166</sup> To restore the balance and create a well-ordered personality, progressive educators believed the school needed to allow for the free creative expression of children's emotions and sublimate these into socially constructive ends.<sup>167</sup> This would guarantee the growth of a new generation committed to human worth and excellence.<sup>168</sup>

Although neither the new psychology nor the new education could be summed up as a single cohesive doctrine, the new psychological theories gave scientific credence to many of the broad pedagogical ideas of the new education.<sup>169</sup> Art educators and critics Read and Lowenfeld freely acknowledged the influence of Freud and Jung on the development of their own theories.<sup>170</sup>

Viewed broadly, the timing of the New Zealand NEF conference in 1937, just two years after the election of a new Labour Government was fortuitous. The New Zealand public were just emerging from the grips of shattering economic depression, which saw a forty per cent fall in national income and more than 70,000 unemployed. Compulsory primary schooling had led to a major increase in school rolls but the Great War brought a halt to the building of new classrooms. As a result, conditions in public schools were dilapidated and it was common, even in the 1930s, for classes of more than fifty pupils to be housed in

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<sup>166</sup> William Boyd, "Reflections on the New Education", *The New Era*, 1956.

<sup>167</sup> These concerns were reflected in the themes of the NEF conferences during the 1920s. Principal lectures at the Calais conference in 1921, for example, focused on "The Creative Self-Expression of the Child". A S Neill spoke of the basic place of psychology in the unconscious mind along with a disciple of Jung, James Young. The theme of the Locarno conference in 1927 was 'The Meaning of Freedom in Education' and in Elsinore, Denmark, two years later the focus was "The New Psychology and the curriculum".

<sup>168</sup> Cremin, 1964, pp. 201-202.

<sup>169</sup> The 1929 NEF Conference on 'The New Psychology and the Curriculum' drew 1800 delegates, and discussions were held on Freudian psycho-analysis, Adlerian psycho-therapy and Jungian analysis and others (See Boyd and Rawson, 1965, pp. 85-86).

<sup>170</sup> Freud was interested in Lowenfeld's work and visited him at the Institute for the blind where he worked in Vienna.

temporary classrooms.<sup>171</sup> The progressive ideas introduced in the 1929 syllabus together with the abolition of the Proficiency Examination and the realignment of educational policy under Michael Savage's Labour Government marked the beginning of a decade of broad educational reform.

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<sup>171</sup> Basil Carryer, *School in New Zealand: The Twenties*, (Waikato Education Centre, Hamilton, 1991), p. 12

## Chapter 5: Child Art – The Age of Innocence

The two preceding chapters focussed on national and international events that were significant in the development of art and craft education in New Zealand prior to Richardson's arrival at Oruaiti School in 1949. The following chapters (Five and Six) consider developments in art and craft education in the 1940s and 1950s. The ideas about the nature of children and their intellectual and social development that characterised the new education movement of the 1920s and 1930s were accompanied by a great fascination with child art. The change in thinking about art education that arose out the educational ferment in the 1930s was such that by the 1940s New Zealand education officials considered an entirely new art syllabus as necessary. This emerged as the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme for Primary Schools, which was to become the 1950 Draft Syllabus and finally the 1961 Art Syllabus.

In the 1940s, Herbert Read and Viktor Lowenfeld each developed their ideas about children and creativity of the 1930s into a coherent approach towards art education. Several art educators such as Marion Richardson, and R. R. Tomlinson in the United Kingdom and Natalie Robinson Cole and Victor D'Amico in the United States also developed methods based on creative self expression in this period. However, the ideas of Cizek, Read and Lowenfeld are widely cited by former New Zealand art and craft specialists as being the most influential on the growth of their own ideas about art education in this period and their theories were to directly influence the 1945 syllabus.

I focus primarily on Cizek's work in this chapter because of the profound influence his ideas were to have on Tovey's pedagogical orientation towards the teaching of art. This orientation not only infused the 1945 art syllabus but also directly shaped the teaching practices of the national team of art and craft advisers who worked with Tovey in the 1950s and 1960s. Further, the ideas about child art that shaped the new curriculum policies of this period embodied a philosophical and pedagogical orientation towards the development of artistic talent in children which Richardson was to reject in his work at Oruaiti School.

## *The Expressive Tradition and Child Art*

The intense interest in children's art in the 1930s and 1940s was fuelled by a combination of the new interest in child psychology, a growing admiration of primitive art and radical developments in painting. In art, as in the school, the centre of gravity remained firmly located in the individual, but the aesthetic emphasis shifted from a concern with art being a 'good likeness' or an 'accurate representation', to a more psychoanalytic concern that saw art as the expression of the child's mind and inner emotions. In pedagogical terms, this meant a significant shift away from the South Kensington model of instruction with its emphasis on traditional skill and precision, towards a more intuitive, non-directive, child-centred approach – methods that Tovey had begun to explore at the King Edward Technical College.

The interest in child art in the 1920s and 1930s was not new. In 1887 Corrado Ricci an Italian art historian seeking shelter from a storm, found himself greatly moved by what he described as "a permanent exhibition, both literary and artistic" of children's graffiti under a bridge.<sup>1</sup> The experience inspired Ricci to collect and study close to 1500 examples of children's art, which he published as *L'Arte dei bambini* (The Art of Little Children). His book was one of the earliest to consider child art as an art form in its own right. From this time onwards to the beginning of the Great War there were exhibitions of child art every year in most major European cities.<sup>2</sup> James Sully's *Studies of Childhood* published in 1895, was another early work that focussed on children's drawings. His book was intended for an audience interested in developmental psychology, an associationist school of psychiatry also known as 'mental chemistry'.<sup>3</sup> Sully's work compared the art of the child with that of 'primitive man' and anticipated Lowenfeld's work in the 1940s by arguing that visual and haptic (relating to the sense of touch) perception are interdependent.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> He recalls that "the sadness of the day, of the place, of my mind, quite out of unison with the brutal and obscene epigrams higher on the wall, reconciled me to the art of the little ones" lower down on the wall. Ricci's book was partly translated in 1894 by Louise Maitland in a psychology journal called *The Pedagogical Seminary* (vol. III, 1894, pp. 302 ff.) cited in John French, "Victorian Responses to Children's Art," *College Art Journal* 15, no. 4 (1956); see also George Boas, *The Cult of Childhood* (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1966). pp. 82-83.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Macdonald writes that the associationists believed that the human mind is "formed by associations of one thing with another as if chemical formulae were being constantly added." Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (London: University of London Press, 1970), p. 324.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

Paul Klee (1879-1940), Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Roger Fry (1866-1934) Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Marion Richardson (1892-1946) were profoundly influenced by child art in the 1920s and developed principles of their own art practice and theory in relation to this. For Klee and many others, child art provided a way for the artist to escape artistic traditions and conventions that they found restricting. For example, in 1912, he wrote:

These are primitive beginnings in art, such as one usually finds in ethnographic collections, or at home in one's nursery. Do not laugh, reader! Children also have artistic ability and there is virtue in their having it! The more helpless they are, the more instructive are the examples they furnish us; and they must be preserved free from corruption at an early age...All this is to be taken seriously, more seriously than all the public galleries when it comes to reforming today's art.<sup>5</sup>

The view of child art as more genuine and pure than adult art led naturally to the pedagogical belief that the child's self-expression should not be corrupted by the teaching of adult concepts in art. Cizek, who opened his Juvenile Art Class in 1897 in Vienna, for instance, often described his method as "taking the lid off".<sup>6</sup> He was adamant that the teacher must not provide direct instruction and must leave all choice of technique, materials and subject to the child's discretion.<sup>7</sup> The teacher's role was simply to provide a charming environment and plentiful material. As Dengler explained in his New Zealand NEF lecture, "Cizek is not interested in preparing children for artistic careers in later life, but only in enabling the unconscious ego of the child to express itself joyfully through art, free from the domination of adult ideas."<sup>8</sup>

When the function of art becomes the release of unconscious ego and emotion, free from adult influence and the acquisition of 'mere skill', the process becomes a fundamentally self-referential one. Cizek, for example, took pains not to introduce his students to concepts such as perspective and realistic colour schemes and discouraged exposure to

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Klee and Felix Klee, *The Diaries of Paul Klee: 1898-1918. Edited, with an Introduction, by Felix Klee* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p. 266; Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 199.

<sup>6</sup> Francesca Wilson, *In the Margins of Chaos: Recollections of Relief Work in and between Three Wars* (London: John Murray, 1944), p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125; see also Efland, *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts*. 1990, p. 193.

<sup>8</sup> A. E Campbell and Bailey C. L., eds., *Modern Trends in Education: The Proceedings of the New Education Fellowship Conference July 1937* (Wellington, N.Z: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1938), p. 236.

adult art recommending, for instance, that the children avoid watching films and that the illustrations in their storybooks should be designed by other children rather than adults. Where this was not possible, he advised, the pictures should be by real artists, and that the primitive picture was better than the sophisticated one.<sup>9</sup>

The conception of the child as innocent and of adult influence as corrupting clearly bears the imprint of a view that has shed or submerged the doctrine of original sin. It also owes a debt to Rousseau's view of the child and the romantic view of children and education more generally. In the post war period this view was given a new accent by the psychology and ideas of Freud, Jung and Piaget, whose theories offered scientific rationales for the beliefs of the pioneer educators of the child study movement. Although Freud did not advocate a return to childhood, he believed that adults never escape childhood at the unconscious level. His theory of repression, neurosis and sublimation gave the idea of art as a process of psychic self-expression a therapeutic edge. This was taken up by Herbert Read in *Education Through Art*, who argued:

The secret of our collective ills is to be traced to the suppression of spontaneous creative ability in the individual...The personality has become disintegrated because the growth natural to it has been thwarted – by coercive discipline and authoritarian morality, by social convention and mechanical toil.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Mind of the Child**

Christopher Green, art historian, suggests that the view of the child as the model for the artist, or more broadly, for the ideal human being, was also influenced by Jean Piaget's work in child psychology. Green maintains that although Piaget's work was not based on child art, his conclusions on the developmental aspects of child psychology "were so profound in their implications and so influential in Europe by the end of the 1920s that they affected the way child art was understood from that time on".<sup>11</sup> Green writes that in *Emile* Rousseau gave drawing an epistemological function and presented it as a "way of progressively learning about the world". The emphasis is placed on:

...The preservation into adulthood of an infantile innocence of vision so as to retain the clear objectivity that is assumed to go with it. From such

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<sup>9</sup> Wilhelm Viola, *Child Art* (London: University of London Press, 1942), pp. 60, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Edward Read, *Education through Art* (London: Faber, 1958), p. 202.

<sup>11</sup> Fineberg, 1997, p. 211.

innocence and objectivity will come a true grasp of the “real,” it is suggested, and this is something that can continue undistorted and fundamentally unchanged into adulthood.<sup>12</sup>

Piaget challenged the foundations of this view of childhood, Green suggests, by demonstrating that the structure of child mind is not only different from adult thought, but that “it is characterised by ‘egocentricity,’ the very reverse of objectivity”.<sup>13</sup>

Like Piaget, Lowenfeld also saw the child mind as being distinctly different from the adult. Echoing Cizek,<sup>14</sup> Lowenfeld argued:

For the child, art is not the same as it is for the adult. Art for the child is merely a means of expression. Since the child’s thinking is different from that of the adult his expression must also be different.... The child sees the world differently from the way he draws it. Precisely from our analysis of this discrepancy between the representation and the thing represented do we gain insight into the child’s real experience. Therefore, it is easy to understand that *any* correction by the teacher, which refers to reality and not to the child’s experience, interferes greatly with the child’s own expression...How ridiculous to overpower these little children’s souls! ... Don’t impose your images on a child! All modes of expression except the child’s own are foreign to him.... Never let a child copy anything!<sup>15</sup>

It was natural, following this view, to regard children’s art, with its innocence, spontaneity and lack of inhibition, both as more natural and more genuine than that of adults.

## Recapitulation Theory

The idea of art education as a process of natural unfolding of the child’s inner powers was reinforced by the theory of recapitulation, a primary argument used by progressive educators for the liberalisation of education.<sup>16</sup> These two ideas are briefly explained here as they offered powerful arguments in support of liberal educational ideology and approaches to child art. The idea of recapitulation was expressed by Rousseau in his opening line of *Emile* (1762) as, “[e]verything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Cizek articulated it in this way: “People make a great mistake in thinking of Child Art merely as a step to adult art. It is a thing in itself, quite shut off and isolated, following its own laws and not the laws of grown up people.” (Quoted in Wilhelm Viola, *Child Art*, London, University of London Press, 1942, p. 63).

<sup>15</sup> Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1947), pp. 1-4.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 154.



of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.” This view reflects the commonly held faith in the “divine endowment of nature”, that is frequently linked to the concept of recapitulation.<sup>17</sup> It was an “incontestable maxim” Rousseau believed, “that the first movements of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart. There is not a single vice to be found in it of which it cannot be said how and whence it entered.”<sup>18</sup> Rousseau’s view that formal education was not natural and therefore against nature was argued from a recapitulatory viewpoint in this way by Guillet, in 1900:

Since it is the order of nature that the new organism should pass through certain developmental stages, it behoves us to study nature’s plan and seek rather to aid than to thwart it. For nature must be right; there is no higher criterion...The parallelism of phylogeny and ontogeny enforces the argument in favour of natural development...It furnishes a double support to the view that education should be a process of orderly and gradual unfolding, without precocity and without interference, from low to ever higher stages; that forcing is unnatural and that the mental problem should be suited to the stage of development reached.<sup>19</sup>

Ellen Key, Swedish feminist author of *The Century of the Child* (1909), was an early proponent of the child-centred approach and also based her ideas on this theory. She articulated it as, “the development of the child answers in miniature to the development of mankind as a whole.”<sup>20</sup>

The theory of recapitulation was actually a scientific one developed by Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) a German biologist, artist and philosopher, which proposed a link between ontogeny (development of individual form) and phylogeny (the development over time of a species, genus or group). The idea of “the childhood of the race” was also advanced by eighteenth century philosophers such as Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), Auguste Comte (1798-1857), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1842). However, George Boas observes that with the advent of Haeckel’s succinctly stated “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” the concept changed in the twentieth century from a metaphor to a virtually accepted technical term.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (London: University of London Press, 1970), p. 320.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or on Education*, trans. Allen Bloom, 2 vols., vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*. p. 1977, p. 155.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen Key, *The Century of the Child*, trans. Frances Maro (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1909), p. 222.

<sup>21</sup> Boas, 1966, pp. 64-5.

In *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, Stephen Jay Gould observes that recapitulation became one of the strongest arguments for child-centred education, providing reformers with “the bulwark of a naturalistic argument: we must not force children to learn in a preset logical pattern; we must, instead, mould education to the child by following the course of his natural development.”<sup>22</sup> Gould states that the popularity of this theory led to the development of recapitulatory curricula in Germany in the late 1800s which visiting American academics brought back with them.<sup>23</sup> While it is not clear how popular recapitulatory curricula became in America, he finds that the advocates “were certainly no fringe movement and the lives of millions of school children were directly influenced by their practices”.<sup>24</sup>

In art education, these ideas were used to justify a particular pedagogical orientation, which manifested in the enduring tension between direct instruction and free expression in art teaching. In *Art and Society* (1931) Herbert Read introduced the theory, which he later termed “the genetic method in aesthetics”, as follows:

There is a general principle known to scientists as “recapitulation” which sees in the development of the individual a reflection of the development of the race; and I doubt if in any sphere of science the principle can be traced so clearly as in the history of art.<sup>25</sup>

## Unfolding

The theory of unfolding, like recapitulation, became an evocative metaphor in the new education movement and was frequently invoked in arguments for greater personal freedom and a more individualised curriculum. At the Heidelberg NEF conference in 1925, for example, the focus topic was ‘The unfolding of creative powers in the child’.<sup>26</sup> The idea of unfolding was anchored in a humanistic belief in the inherent potential of human beings. As a developmental theory, it reflected the belief that growth and learning takes place in stages and that each stage of development is part of an integrated whole. As children pass from one level of development to another, all the various stages are

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<sup>22</sup> Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> Gould explains that the German model developed by Tuiskon Ziller (1817-1883) was based on a cultural epochs theory with the eight years of primary school divided into cultural and literary history, which the child is recapitulating at the time of study. “To put it bluntly, let him read about savages when he is a savage himself.” Gould, 1977, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>25</sup> Herbert Read, *The Meaning of Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1931).

<sup>26</sup> Read, *Education through Art*. p. 285.

integrated into the whole as they develop at their own rate and in their own unique direction.

Froebel, the founder of the kindergarten movement in 1840, was one of the earliest to use the term unfolding in this context. His ideas had a great influence on the child-centred educators of the new education movement. His choice of the word kindergarten (children's garden) rather than children's school was based on his belief that education should be a process of drawing out the innate abilities of children through carefully selected activities in play, drawing, song and myth-making. He explained, "I shall not call this an infant school because I do not intend the children to be schooled, but to be allowed under the gentlest treatment to unfold freely."<sup>27</sup> Froebel believed that all learning should be based upon the child's natural stages of development, which repeated the genetic development of humankind. He said, "[i]t is the destiny and life work of all things to unfold their essence, hence their divine being, and, therefore, the Divine Unity itself..."<sup>28</sup>

The alignment of unfolding with the theory of recapitulation in art education was underscored by research such as Sully's, Ricci's and Stanley Hall's, which demonstrated that children from all societies draw in a similar way at the same ages. Cizek used this argument, for instance, to make a case for self-directed learning. He insisted, "...the child should not be given ready made things or knowledge. He should acquire as far as possible everything himself. The collective heritage of mankind is within himself. We should not accelerate the process."<sup>29</sup> Cizek's ideas about children's art abilities were hugely influential and even today his name is almost synonymous with child art and the concept of free creative self-expression.

The conception of development that underlies the theory of unfolding in this view begins from an original 'whole' or 'absolute,' a 'miniature of the ideal' which is 'immanent' in human life and consists of a process of what Dewey described as "the gradual making explicit and outward of what is thus wrapped up".<sup>30</sup> The problem with this conception of development, Dewey explained in *Democracy and Education*, is that what is 'wrapped up'

<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Froebel, cited in Christopher J Lucas, *Our Western Educational Heritage* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 405.

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Froebel and Josephine Jarvis, *Die Pädagogik Des Kindergartens: Friedrich Froebel's Pedagogics of the Kindergarten, or, His Ideas Concerning the Play and Playthings of the Child* (New York: Appleton, 1895), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Viola, 1936, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> George Wells, A, "Goethe and the Development of Science 1750-1900," *Science in History* 5 (1979), p. 18.

is an archetype, an idea that is fixed or static, what Göethe termed a “generalized picture *in potentia*”.<sup>31</sup> In Dewey’s view, Froebel’s notion of development and his method of promoting this was “badly hampered by the fact that he conceived development to be the unfolding of a ready-made latent principle”.<sup>32</sup> He argued:

A remote goal of complete unfoldedness is, in technical philosophic language, transcendental. That is, it is something apart from direct experience and perception. So far as experience is concerned, it is empty; it represents a vague sentimental aspiration rather than anything which can be intelligently grasped and stated.<sup>33</sup>

### ***A Pioneer in Child Art: Cizek’s Methods***

Children have their own laws which they must needs obey. What right do grownups have to interfere? People should draw as they feel...Nothing here is made, but it has grown like flowers.

–Franz Cizek<sup>34</sup>

Throughout his career Cizek remained more popular in Britain, France and America than in Austria. His first international exhibition was in London in 1908, followed by another at the art education congress in Dresden in 1912. In the 1920s he exhibited in Cologne and in 1920 in Holland, at the New Education Fellowship Conference in Montreux in 1923, and again in Holland in 1924. With help from Francesca Wilson, a Birmingham teacher, and Bertram Hawker, an English educationist, work from his *Juvenile Art Class* was exhibited in England under the auspices of Save the Children Fund from 1921 to 1924. From 1924-1929 this exhibition was shown throughout America and in the 1930s further exhibitions were held in Holland, South Africa, England, Scotland and Wales. His work inspired art educators Marion Richardson and R. R. Tomlinson in England who promoted his methods in the 1920s and 1930s. Teachers and members of the public viewing his students’ work were amazed at the children’s level of skill and accomplishment. Littlejohns describes the public’s reaction to the work of Cizek’s students:

...The effect was staggering. It was hard to believe that children of seven to fifteen, however highly endowed, could express with certainty, vividness and power, such individual and truly inspired conceptions.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The MacMillan Co, 1916), p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Viola, 1942, pp. 32-33.

And when the methods of the teacher became known amazement gave way to incredulity. For the children were not, in the usual sense of the word taught at all! There was no insistence on technique, no ordered method of study...Method, material, subject and purpose, all these are left to the child's free choice.<sup>35</sup>

The average number of children in Cizek's classes was twenty-five, and he preferred his pupils to begin lessons at two years of age, before they were 'spoiled' by adult concepts. Children under ten years of age came once or twice a week for one and a half hours each time, while the older children (from ten to fourteen years), came once or twice a week for two hours a time. The children who came to his classes were gifted children, generally recommended by teachers or occasionally by parents.

Wilhelm Viola's books on Cizek's method's, *Child Art and Franz Cizek* (1937) and *Child Art* (1942), provide a remarkable window into Cizek's work and methods. Viola, a close friend of Cizek, became an advocate for his work and lectured on his methods at NEF conferences, universities and courses on child art around the world. His book *Child Art* includes many questions he was asked at conferences and courses, as well as a chapter based on his own observations of Cizek's "Lessons," which he recorded himself. Word of Cizek's methods also spread through the magazines of the Progressive Education Society and the NEF in England and the United States. Viola's *Child Art* is interesting, for although Cizek insisted that children in his classes were not 'taught' how to do art, "nothing here is made, it has grown like flowers," the answers and the transcripts of his lessons seem to point towards an incongruity between his theory and his method. Reproductions of student work from Cizek's classes, particularly in paper-cutting work, demonstrate a remarkable level of accuracy and skill. Macdonald argues that:

Far from being free and fluent with the bold, delightfully crude, and imaginative touches found in free child art, the work illustrated is extremely sophisticated, extremely competent, and very much influenced by adult folk art and illustrations done for children's tales by adults. Many of the works, notably the patterns of the complicated woodcuts and papercuts, require very careful measuring and working out. It was their sheer competence which astonished British and American art teachers, many of whom thought that a well-shaded group of solids was the apogee of child art.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> J. Littlejohns, *Art in Schools* (London: University of London Press, 1928), pp. 38-39.

<sup>36</sup> Macdonald, 1970, pp. 344-345.

While a small number art historians have commented on this divergence in more recent years, this does not appear to have permeated general perceptions of his work in education, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s when the self-expressive movement reached its zenith in progressive education.

Although Viola's first book on Cizek's methods was published in 1937, most New Zealand teachers' perceptions of Cizek's work came from Dengler's very brief, glowing introduction to his methods at the NEF 1937 conference. James Collinge's background chapter "The Development of Art Education in New Zealand" in the Department of Education's book *Art in Schools: The New Zealand Experience* (1978), mentions Cizek's work and seems representative of the way his ideas have been understood in the context of art education in New Zealand schools:

It was Cizek's belief that the child should be free to express himself in art, without imposed adult techniques. Consequently he advocated that the teacher should remain in the background, giving little or no help to the child, even if asked for, in order for the effort to come from the child, nothing being made easy for him.<sup>37</sup>

In a book on her father, *A Blaze of Colour: Gordon Tovey Artist Educator*, Carol Henderson describes Cizek's method as follows:

Cizek had been a pioneer in the child art movement, based on simple but at the time, revolutionary ideas. Priority was to be given to the environment, which must be secure and pleasant. Next the children must be left alone without teacher interference or adult help. Children would create art naturally, Cizek argued, only if left alone. He believed that all child art is drawn from feelings and emotions in a non-intellectual manner, and that skill teaching was appropriate only after children had reached adolescence.<sup>38</sup>

The seeming incongruity between Cizek's theory and his practice is apparent in Viola's answers to questions he was asked about Cizek's methods at various conferences:

Q. Why is intellect fatal to art?

A. Because intellect in art is the sin.

Q. Should one try to influence taste at all in children?

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<sup>37</sup> Ray Thorburn and B. Peter F. Smith, eds., *Art in Schools: The New Zealand Experience* (Wellington: Dept. of Education, School Publications Branch, 1978), p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 60.

A. Not directly

Q. How is it possible for a child to preserve his freshness if constantly surrounded by picture books, cinemas, etc?

A. It is difficult, and therefore we don't always get the kind of child art we should like to get. We would prefer it if the child was less spoilt by adult and over-intellectual civilization.

Q. How can a child's work be perfect?

A. It is perfect if it is adequate to his age, uninfluenced by adults, not a copy, and genuine.

Q. If a child's work is perfect, where does the teacher come in?

A. Firstly, not every child's work is perfect. So the teacher can and should encourage the child to produce perfectly. Secondly, even with the perfect works of a child there is plenty of scope to guide that child his way. The temptations are great.

Q. Should wrong colours be corrected in a young child's work?

A. There are no "wrong" colours in a young child's work. And a correction of a young child's work is rather a corruption, or as Cizek says, a forgery.

Q. Should we not use pale shades? Nature has pale shades.

A. Art is not nature. Art is not a representation of nature. Children do not copy nature. As strong, courageous creatures they have a birthright for bright colours. The brightest colours are just right. No normal healthy young child will choose pale colours. The adult usually supplies them.

Q. Is object drawing allowed? If allowed, at what stage?

A. There was never an object in Cizek's classes.

Q. Are children ever encouraged to base imaginative drawings on a concrete object before the child?

A. Young children never.

Q. Do they get as much time as they want?

A. Certainly. Nobody pushes them.

Q. Are the children shown anything during an art lesson?

A. Nothing.

Q. Were other subjects taught at Cizek's school?

A. No. But Art was not “taught” either.

When this is compared with a transcript from one of Cizek’s art classes with a group of young children on December 7, 1935, which is also included in Viola’s book on Cizek’s methods, (cited below) the divergence is more striking:

(On the wall hang nine Santa Clauses and nine “Krampuses”<sup>39</sup> done by former pupils).

*Cizek:* These are done by former pupils and they should help you to do as well. Now I shall cover the “Krampuses” so that you can’t see them. You should make quite different “Krampuses.” But we should first finish with Santa Claus. What else do you have to do with Santa Claus?

*Child:* Decorations.

*Cizek:* Now you get more colours: gold, silver, orange, and yellow. Much yellow. (To the assistant) A beautiful yellow! (To a child) Show me what you have done. Yes, you can make nice decorations. In gold, silver and so on. And you get a nice paint now. What can you do with it? I must ask you what you want. Not you ask me what I want. I want nothing. You must want something. Do the parts you want yellow. Quick! We must make the “Krampus” today. Now begin to paint. Santa Claus is tired of waiting...

(Blue paints and brushes are distributed...) <sup>40</sup>

*Cizek:* (To a child) You should not make the head so small...(To a child) You take too little of each colour. You must take a lot of each colour or it won’t be nice... (To another child) You do the white beard on the white shirt, which makes no contrast. You must make what is below dark. (To the class) You are dull. Those before you were much brighter. You are really slow.

*Child:* I have finished Santa Claus.

*Cizek:* I am anxious to see it. Now you can make the child who is praying. Come and look. (He leads him to a statue) This is Santa Claus also, and here is the child who prays. Do make a boy like it. (Cizek covers up the “Krampus” sculptures later.) Who has finished? (Nearly all put up their hands.) It is high time.

*Child:* I have finished.

*Cizek:* Have you done the boy?

<sup>39</sup> A Krampus is a horned demon in a male form that in the alpine regions of Europe is believed to accompany Santa Claus. In the first week of December young men dress up as Krampuses and roam the streets frightening children with black sheepskin costumes, chains and bells.

<sup>40</sup> The smaller children get new brushes for each colour. The older ones clean their brushes themselves.



*Cizek:* Now we shall use blue and red. (To a child) Would you like to paint with gold? Not covering other colours, but between colours!

*Cizek:* We shall begin the “Krampus” on the other side of the paper. We shall draw it first. We shall draw the “Krampus” in such a way that every part is done separately. First the head and only the head, then only the neck, then only the body, and then joined to it the legs and arms one at a time. Yes, and in the head put the eyes, and the snout – because the devil has a snout – and then the ears. And the ears are pointed like a hedgehog’s. And at the head he has horns. We shall draw everything separately...

*Cizek:* And below put the legs on separately. The legs are thick as an elephants and one has a cloven hoof. The other leg has an ordinary foot. But there are “Krampuses” who have cloven hooves on both legs. And then comes something which is very important: the whole body is covered with bristles like a brush...

*Cizek:* Now begin. First the head, and then the separate parts of the body. And not everything at one go. You can do that when you are twenty. The whole is made up off many parts. Not one line. I wonder who will do this. You should start at the top. Not in the middle of the paper...(To a child) now do the arms! (To another child) But these are very thin legs – you should make thick legs. (Later) Listen. What else has the “Krampus” besides his tongue and horns?

*Child:* I have finished the “Krampus....”

*Cizek:* You must give him eyes and then hair. (To another child) Get on; it’s all right. – The next time we shall see who has finished first.<sup>41</sup>

It seems clear by contrasting these excerpts that there were some fundamental differences between the replies Viola gave at conferences and Cizek’s classroom practice as transcribed by Viola. In the transcript Cizek does in fact criticise children’s work, “You must try your best. Santa Claus is badly done. And you should not do the “Krampus” with a skirt but with thick long legs.” ... “You should not make the head so small”... “You have not used enough red”... “But these are very thin legs – you should make thick legs” and, probably with a teasing tone, “You are dull. Those before you were much brighter. You are really slow.” One of the children is shown a sculpture during the lesson and they seem to be moved along by Cizek at a fairly lively pace. Children were given some choice over the use of colour, but it was often a choice between two colours, rather than many. During the course of the lesson, colours and new brushes were handed out and removed by an assistant as Cizek gave instructions. The children seem to have felt comfortable to

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<sup>41</sup> Viola, *Child Art.*, pp. 115-117.

make exclamations and to suggest embellishments to the topic, such as the addition of a tail to the Krampus, which Cizek welcomed, but the lesson is both highly structured and teacher directed.

It is curious that Viola has juxtaposed the questions and answers together with the transcripts in his book and yet does not offer any comment on the apparent incongruity and perhaps he never noticed this. Both Munro and Macdonald read Viola's books and were struck by the inconsistency in Cizek's methods.<sup>42</sup> Macdonald suggests it is possible that both Viola and Wilson "were so carried away by Cizek's philosophy that they blinded themselves to the firm methods he used with his pupils".<sup>43</sup> It is important to emphasise that art education for children in Vienna at this time consisted of children drawing straight lines between dots that gradually became further and further apart. When the children had mastered this activity they progressed to copying from the blackboard, and then at intermediate level to copying from plaster models and complex printed designs. The aim of art education was to train the child to be able to copy exactly.<sup>44</sup>

Cizek's insistence, "I am the friend of my pupils. They are my fellow workers and I learn from their work," was an unorthodox view.<sup>45</sup> His genuine interest in children and in the connections between their artwork and their personal experiences marked a radical departure from traditional methods.<sup>46</sup> Wilson, who was a frequent visitor to his classes while she was doing relief work in Vienna in the 1920s, recalls Cizek discussing a child's work with visitors as follows:

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<sup>42</sup> Munro, 1956; Macdonald, 1970. Note: Francesca Wilson published three booklets on Cizek's work, *The Child as Artist, Some Conversations with Professor Cizek* (1921); "A Lecture by Professor Cizek" and "A Class at Professor Cizek's." She also published a book on her experiences as an aid worker titled, *In The Margins of Chaos: recollections of relief work in and between three wars*, London, John Murray, 1944. In this, she writes briefly but vividly about her impressions of Cizek's work (pp. 124-128). Her work along with Viola's *Child Art and Franz Cizek*, (1937) and *Child Art* (1942) introduced thousands of teachers to Cizek's philosophy.

<sup>43</sup> Macdonald, 1970, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup> Viola, 1936, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Wilson, 1944, p. 125.

<sup>46</sup> A child in Cizek's class commented on the contrast in classroom culture:

When I became a pupil of the Juvenile Art Class at the age of ten, I was astonished to see boys and girls working in the same room. What astonished me most of all, however, was that we were allowed to leave our seats and wander about at our own sweet will and that we could talk to one another while we were at work and look at one another's work. There was one little boy, who never spoke to anyone and who always drew wonderful robbers, so well that we were afraid of them. Once at the time of the downfall of our monarchy, he even drew a picture of a revolution... During the last years we had a gramophone in the class, and many beautiful records, gay ones and sad ones. We often used to beat time or sing. When you enter the classroom you are dazzled by the bright coloured pictures on the walls... On a table there are all sorts of things, modelled in clay and plaster or cut out of various other materials. Often there are flowers too, which have been brought to the class by the children. The whole room looks as bright and gay as a fairy place.

“Look at these reindeer snuffing the wind,” he said. “At their tracks in the snow and the little one suckling its mother! The force, the sense of wild nature! This is one of Franz Probst’s first drawings – he made it when he was ten. What adult could have done it? Now criminal types and prostitutes attract him. He follows them about in the street, observing and noting, and he draws them with extraordinary power. Yet he is an innocent naive boy...He saw a woman kissing a man at the station the other day and said, ‘and now I suppose they will have a baby.’ He is tall for his age, but a child still. Look at this self-portrait, the skull with the dagger and the candle beside it. This is what he saw when he looked in the mirror one night, pressing back his cheeks. And this other – of himself as a soldier, deserting the ranks. There is nothing morbid in all this, or if there is, he is getting it out of his system by his drawings for child art has a great psychological value...”<sup>47</sup>

Cizek’s unorthodox methods led him to be ridiculed and attacked by art teachers in Austria for two decades until his reputation abroad grew enough to silence his critics. Viola writes that at this time drawing from the imagination or even from nature was never considered.<sup>48</sup> It is not surprising therefore that his followers were somewhat uncritical in their enthusiastic promotion of his methods. Both Viola’s and Wilson’s accounts are often adulatory. For example, in his introduction to *Child Art and Franz Cizek*, Viola writes:

Cizek is one of the great men of our time. His discovery of child art will make his name immortal. Cizek is first of all the liberator of the child from the slavery of the senseless and boring “art instruction” which deadened spontaneity and even endangered real talent. Cizek has freed millions of children from “art” drill. And more, he has liberated the tremendous creative energy of the child which had been neglected for untold generations.<sup>49</sup>

The lack of clarity around Cizek’s theory and his methods was exacerbated by the fact that he appears to have published only one book himself, *Children’s Coloured Paper Work* (1927), which focussed solely on this art form, an intricate and traditional craft that required considerable skill.<sup>50</sup> As a result, teachers abroad who tried to copy Cizek’s methods based on Viola lectures and Wilson’s observations and booklets were often

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<sup>47</sup> Viola, 1936, pp. 125-6.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Viola, 1936, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> In this book, echoing Froebel, Cizek writes that this particular form of “artistic handwork”...“awakens a number of productive impulses, and brings out all sorts of intellectual faculties and gifts. It requires energy, determination, reflection, and independence, and this makes it excellent for the training of a strength of purpose essential to the development of character. Last but not least, such work awakens a love of handicraft, of the work of the hand, which is the origin of all art.” F Cizek, *Children’s Coloured Paper Work* (Vienna: Anton Schroll and Co., 1927), pp. 4-5.

dismayed when they found that undirected children were “not the bubbling creative vessels they had assumed”.<sup>51</sup>

Cizek followed Froebel’s belief that the development of the child comes from within and Viola quotes liberally from Froebel in his first chapter of *Child Art*. Interestingly, like Froebel’s, theory of unfolding, which Dewey believed, “set up a goal that meant the arrest of growth”, Cizek’s belief that the child should draw as it feels, free from adult influence, in fact demonstrates that with adult guidance and a specially cultivated environment, excellent results are possible with very young children.<sup>52</sup> This is a quite different conception of art education from the “taking the lid off” approach, which he appeared to propound and certainly came to personify.<sup>53</sup>

The paradox in Cizek’s method is noteworthy because for educational reformers interested in creative education, Cizek’s work was celebrated as a stunning confirmation of the principles of the new education in action. Viewed broadly, and in light of Tovey’s role as National Supervisor of Art and Craft, such divergences would seem to point towards the inevitable gulf between what an expert teacher can inspire and the ability of others to translate this vision.

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<sup>51</sup> Macdonald, 1970, p. 346.

<sup>52</sup> Dewey, 1916, p. 48.

<sup>53</sup> When asked by Francesca Wilson, “How do you do it?” Cizek is said to have replied: “But I don’t do it. I take off the lid, and other art masters clap the lid on – that’s the only difference.” Wilson then asked, “But you must show them some things; you must at some time have pointed out their mistakes in proportion. Don’t you point it out so that the child should learn and improve?” Cizek replied: Children have their own laws, which they must needs obey. What right do grownups have to interfere? People should draw as they feel...Nothing here is made, but it has grown like flowers.” (Excerpts from Francesca Wilson, cited in Viola’s *Child Art* pp. 32-33).

## Chapter 6: The Emergency Education Scheme and the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme

The first part of this chapter examines ‘The Emergency Education Scheme’, a remarkable experiment in community education made necessary when New Zealand defence forces took over schools in and around Palmerston North and Fielding leaving 1700 children without classrooms. The remarkable success of this scheme, particularly the art and craft centre directed by Sam Williams, an Art and Craft supervisor appointed by Beeby, worked as a catalyst for the development of the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme and the establishment of the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education the following year. The 1945 Art Scheme is discussed in the second part of this chapter.

### *The Emergency Education Scheme*

On a national level, in spite of the inspirational stir the NEF conference caused in ideas about education, it was clear to Beeby that neither a new syllabus nor the abolition of the proficiency examination were enough in themselves to encourage average teachers to make radical changes in their teaching methods.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the innovations and permissions of the 1929 syllabus, teaching practices in the late 1930s and early 1940s remained mired in traditional techniques. This was particularly the case in subjects considered peripheral, such as physical education and art, where inspectors were unable to give teachers the support they could with more formal subjects.<sup>2</sup> Looking back on the state of art education in this period, Beeby recalls:

With rare exceptions, art lessons still centred on techniques and the immortalising in pencil of the chalk-boxes and staffroom teapots of my childhood. Because of the shortage of materials in wartime, the crafts were in yet sorrier condition, and teachers in desperation, had to have recourse to such spurious crafts as pokerwork<sup>3</sup> and the making of something out of available scraps, such as dicky-birds out of pinecones,

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<sup>1</sup> Beeby, *The Biography of an Idea - Beeby on Education*, 1992, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Pokerwork is the art of decorating wood or other materials with burn marks from a heated solid-point tool similar to a soldering iron.

a form of craft I unkindly defined as the making of rubbish out of rubbish.<sup>4</sup>

It was apparent to Beeby that to maintain the momentum Fraser had given to educational reform, it would be necessary to find new non-bureaucratic ways of “stimulating the liveliest teachers to experiment with novel methods on their own account, or to join together in groups of their own making to break new ground”.<sup>5</sup>

One of the methods the Department used to facilitate this new atmosphere was to create what Beeby termed “a relatively new kind of creature, the subject adviser,<sup>6</sup> who would have no other function than to assist and stimulate teachers in one subject”.<sup>7</sup> The first of these, Philip Smithells, was appointed by Beeby in 1939 as the Superintendent of Physical Education. Smithells was a graduate of Bedales School in England, one of the first co-educational secular boarding schools in England. Bedales placed an emphasis on arts, crafts and drama conceptualised within liberal democratic principles similar to A. S Neill’s Summerhill.

Smithells was something of a renaissance man. As well as being a gifted athlete, he was interested in modern dance, acting, Quakerism, mental health, peace work and internationalism.<sup>8</sup> He contributed to radio programmes, wrote regularly for the *Education Gazette*, and given a free hand by Beeby, rapidly re-organised the national programme of physical education in public schools. He adopted the 1933 English Syllabus of Physical Training, reintroduced a third year of training for physical education specialists and recruited a team of enthusiastic area organisers with whom he worked closely.<sup>9</sup> Beeby found that he gave the subject a “refreshing intellectual respectability” and gathered around him a team of advisers, who were “very different from the ‘physical jerks’

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<sup>4</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> For many people looking back at the development of the Art and Craft Branch the concept of the specialist subject adviser specialist begins with Beeby. However, it seems likely that Beeby would have been aware of the early drawing instructors who were hired by individual Education Boards and worked in an itinerant capacity in schools in their own districts following Stout’s introduction of drawing in to the syllabus in 1885. There had also previously been advisers and specialists in agriculture, physical education and music. Beeby’s vision was broader than this in that under the new system there was a national supervisor responsible for a team of advisers, whereas the original drawing masters had worked for boards in isolation.

<sup>7</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Stothart, “Philip Ashton Smithells: Physical Education and Educational Reform,” in *The Beeby Fascicles*, ed. Geraldine McDonald and Richard Benton (Te Aro Press, 1992), p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

specialist of the past”.<sup>10</sup> Smithell’s reorganisation was so successful in terms of changing school practice that Beeby found it provided a valuable model for other subjects.<sup>11</sup>

### **An Experiment in Art and Craft Education**

In 1941, by what Beeby saw as “a strange stroke of luck”, the war provided an opening for a similar reform in art and crafts education.<sup>12</sup> When Japan entered the war in December 1941 and New Zealand forces mobilised for internal defence, a number of schools in Palmerston North and Fielding were taken over for military and hospital purposes. Out of thirteen schools in the district, only two were operating as schools at the beginning of 1942.<sup>13</sup> Large numbers of male teachers (Seventy per cent of the total male teaching personnel by 1945) were absorbed into the armed forces. The closure of schools created the opportunity for an exceptional educational experiment. With Fraser’s approval, and support from local authorities and teachers’ unions, Beeby appointed Douglas Ball, Senior Inspector of Maori Schools, to organise “schools without walls” for the duration of the emergency. Ball made “a brilliant job of it”, Beeby recalled, turning “a stark necessity into an educational experiment with implications for the future”.<sup>14</sup>

The 1700 students without classrooms were divided into groups, each with a base, often in a home, a garage or a shop, from where they went to church halls, libraries, council chambers and sports buildings for activities. Groups of 100 children were divided into groups of ten students who became self-governing units with their own elected leader and secretary. The school week was divided into fifteen periods with two ninety-minute periods in the morning and one in the afternoon. Fifteen minutes were allowed between periods as children often had to cycle or walk more than a kilometre between the locations of the various activities.<sup>15</sup>

Activities included sketching outdoors, handwork, physical education, gardening, collecting ergot,<sup>16</sup> educational films, basket making, and camouflage net making. Visits

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<sup>10</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *AJHR*, E-1, 1943, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 142.

<sup>15</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, “The New Zealand Education Gazette,” (Wellington, New Zealand: Government Printer, 1942), p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> Ergot is a fungus that was traditionally used to stop bleeding. In many areas of New Zealand the fruiting body of ergot grows from the centre of dandelions in late summer and autumn. During the war years it was common for children

were also organised to various institutions in the community and included the fire brigade headquarters, the council chambers, the courthouse, a freezing works, a drapery store, gasworks, bacon, butter and wool-scouring factories, a tailor shop, a brick kiln, an abattoir, a flour mill and the borough reservoir.<sup>17</sup> Each child was provided with a diary, an exercise book and a sketchbook. The diaries were to be written up in the two weekly library periods and were to provide an “opportunity for the child to put down his own unvarnished impressions of a type of schooling, which invited him to think for himself”.<sup>18</sup>

A ‘jobs bureau’ was organised to help in the community and children were delegated jobs that often meant working alongside adult workers. Some of these included sorting laundry and cleaning silver at the hospital, weeding public gardens, helping infant teachers, distributing anti-incendiary sand to householders and doing odd jobs for soldiers’ wives such as fixing punctures.<sup>19</sup> Excerpts from the children’s diaries featured in the April 1942 edition of the *Education Gazette*. One child’s entry said:

We went to a physical education at Milverton Park and had a great time. Next we cycled to the Little Theatre to tidy up and found that we had made a mistake and that we should be ergoting, so we went along to Job Bureau. The supervisor said to go home and do some hard job for our mothers.<sup>20</sup>

The greatest success of the scheme in Beeby’s view was the art and craft centre run by Sam Williams, an Associate of the Royal College of Art and former stage designer in England. Because of the shortage of materials caused by the war, Williams had to focus on crafts that used locally available materials such as clay, wool, waste paper, cardboard and wire. The large hall commandeered for the purpose, “was a riot of activity”, Beeby recalls, with weaving, puppet making, pottery, papier-mâché, knitting, wool dyeing using local plants and spinning all being popular activities.<sup>21</sup> Williams’ experience in the theatre led him to introduce drama through puppet shows which were hugely popular with the children. Manual groups made wooden puppet theatres while other children designed glove puppets and background props. Children wrote their own scripts for the

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living in rural areas to gather containers of ergot, which their parents and teachers posted to local hospitals to be extracted for use on the war front. The children called these chimney-sweepers because of their distinctive shape.

<sup>17</sup> *The New Zealand Education Gazette*, June 1, 1942, p. 124.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 142.



performances, which were based on some of the places they had visited during the scheme such as the fire station, the abattoirs or experiences such as the night-time black-outs. Williams described some of the activities in the *Education Gazette*:

A children's orchestra from the music period provided music for a play in which appeared a ballet of eels, the sun with waving rays, the wind, who inflated and deflated himself, birds, fish, elves and microbes, with the scene set in the local waterworks reserve... Other teams modelled animals in paper over wire armatures for a fantastic zoo. These imaginative creations, coloured by the children to their own satisfaction, and called by them pre-hysterical animals, were set amongst equally fantastic vegetable growth, similarly modelled of paper on wire. ... Clay modelling proved itself an excellent craft for boys who, from the outset, were perfectly at home with this material. Simple seated and recumbent figures and animals were made direct for ultimate firing. Life and oversized heads produced slip-off papier maché masks which were later coloured and varnished. This work was purely creative, little suggestion or control on the part of the teacher being necessary, and the results were both imaginative and colourful.<sup>22</sup>

Although the scheme only lasted for five weeks, it received a largely positive press and most parents were supportive, with only scattered complaints in the local newspapers about children wearing out shoes from too much running about, and the "excessive number of hobbies or spare time activities which could well be done outside of school hours".<sup>23</sup> Many felt that the scheme had provided a unique opportunity for reuniting the children with their own communities in which they would soon be working as adults.<sup>24</sup> Teachers also found the work gave them a better opportunity of coming to know their pupils and commented on the absence of any misbehaviour.

As part of the physical education activities Phillip Smithells organised a three-day camp, which he hoped would provide a model for future organised school camps. He reported, "Not the least of the joys of the camp were the real personal contacts between child and teacher, perhaps closer than in any other part of the Emergency Scheme."<sup>25</sup>

Beeby found that the scheme demonstrated "that when the walls were down, the resources of the whole community could be used for education and the abilities of many people

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<sup>22</sup> *The New Zealand Education Gazette*, June 1, 1942, pp. 123-124.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1, 1942, p. 128.

could be tapped in a way that had previously not been considered.”<sup>26</sup> In all, the experiment was judged a resounding success, not only because of the pleasure children gained from working in this way and the remarkable community support, but because, as Beeby observed, it demonstrated in practical terms that this was an effective way to learn. Importantly, in terms of art and craft education, Beeby found that the experiment revealed the public was willing to “temporarily accept the idea that the arts could co-exist alongside serious subjects”.<sup>27</sup>

### **Further Explorations in the Development of National Art and Craft Education**

Encouraged by the success of the Scheme and its implications for wider use in the school system, Beeby appointed Williams as acting National Supervisor for one year in 1942 to undertake a survey of art and handwork in schools, with a view to developing a national programme.<sup>28</sup> Six months after the end of the Scheme, Williams outlined a number of recommendations for developing crafts in schools, in the October edition of *The Education Gazette*. He wrote most of the nine pages devoted to craft in this edition and made a strong case for the essential position of crafts in the curriculum:

There is in every child an impulse to create, a desire to make something, that is just as fundamental, though more easily killed, than his desire to eat and run and sleep. Any one in whom this impulse is thwarted is so much the poorer as a human being...it is no longer possible to give a complete education through crafts alone, but it is equally impossible for education to be complete without crafts.<sup>29</sup>

Williams provided teachers with four general principles worked out by the Department, to help them decide what was good handwork and what was not. These were as follows:

A good craft should be capable of development – that is to say, it should allow for progressive increase of skill and taste over a period of years.

The craft should be capable of being progressively taught.

A good school craft should be constructive rather than merely decorative.

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<sup>26</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *The New Zealand Education Review*, April 1, 1942, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., October 1, [missing year] p. 232.

Wherever possible, crafts should be chosen that deal with New Zealand raw materials.

Pokerwork was singled out for teachers as an example of ‘not so good handwork’ because the technique was so simple that after a few attempts no great improvement could be expected. It was not developmental and therefore could not be progressively taught – that is, a child’s fifth attempt was likely to be as adept as his fiftieth. It was essentially decorative and not constructive in the sense that the decoration does not grow out of the construction, as it does in the case of a glaze on a pot or the patterns woven into a scarf.<sup>30</sup>

In his survey, Williams found that with the exception of a few schools, craft work was superficial and badly hampered by a lack of supplies and qualified teachers. The combination of these obstacles led the Department to decide against rapid reform and to focus instead on developing crafts in just a few schools which would be run as demonstration schools and used to spread new ideas and teaching methods. Waterloo School in Hutt Valley was chosen as a demonstration school.

### **Doreen Blumhardt**

On a visit to Christchurch Training College in 1942, Beeby met Doreen Blumhardt, a young graduate who had taken an extra year of specialist training in art and craft in 1939. He was impressed with her abilities and teaching methods and invited her to apply for an existing staff vacancy at Waterloo School. She was appointed as an art specialist in February 1943 with a brief to experiment with the teaching of crafts in the primary school using Waterloo as a base. The position allowed Blumhardt to spend considerable time in the Department of Education working closely with Sam Williams and Beeby to develop craft education. They decided that the focus in the demonstration schools should remain on the crafts that had been most successful in the Emergency Schooling Scheme: pottery, bookbinding, weaving, spinning and fabric printing.

The position allowed Blumhardt the opportunity to experiment with some of the new ideas about art education she had enjoyed at the NEF conference. Blumhardt recalls:

As a first year student in 1937, together with a few other students, I had been able to hear some of the lectures given by Lismer and Dengler at

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 232-33.

the conference...to be offered the opportunity to work under Beeby in putting these ideas into practice, was for me, a most exciting prospect.<sup>31</sup>

At Waterloo, Blumhardt was given considerable help by Walter Harris, Supervisor of Teaching Aids, who she found sympathetic to Beeby's vision for the arts. Harris helped Blumhardt to source materials at a time when paper, crayons, brushes and paint were largely unavailable because of the war. Sam Williams designed small looms and the Petone Woollen Mills supplied wool. Children also gathered wool from farm fences and brought newspaper from home for painting, which was prepped with a white wallpaper paint to cover over the ink. Blumhardt persuaded Buntings to make hog-fitch brushes and a commercial paint factory to experiment with making powder paint colours and crayons. She found the level of cooperation and support from businesses remarkable, and the early test samples eventually led to these materials being produced for schools throughout New Zealand.<sup>32</sup> Beeby invited sceptical heads of neighbouring schools to visit Blumhardt at Waterloo to witness what he felt Emergency Schooling Scheme had proved, that "worthwhile crafts *could* be taught in a normal classroom *and* were worthy of the proper craft rooms that we hoped would follow."<sup>33</sup>

At the end of Blumhardt's first year in 1943, Beeby, Fraser and two inspectors visited her at Waterloo and decided the programme should be extended to primary schools across the country. Blumhardt designed a week-long immersion course in crafts to demonstrate the new methods and materials. Over the next six years Blumhardt travelled around New Zealand as Assistant Area Organiser in Art and Handwork, covering every education board area, teaching groups of teachers, headmasters and inspectors the value of art and craft.<sup>34</sup> She recalls the curious process of converting men to the joys of craft:

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<sup>31</sup> D. Blumhardt, "The Place of Art and Craft in Education Reform," in *The Beeby Fascicles* 2, ed. G McDonald and R Benton (Wellington: Te Aro Press, 1992), p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>33</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 144 (Italics Beeby's).

<sup>34</sup> There is some confusion about the title of Blumhardt's position. Collinge (1978) writes that when Blumhardt was first appointed to the staff vacancy at Waterloo School it was to the position of 'art specialist'. He states that she was then appointed Assistant Area Organiser in Art and Handwork in 1944 on the recommendation of the committee who were working on the Tentative Art Scheme. Carol Henderson's biography of Tovey (*A Blaze of Colour*, 1998) also mentions her position as Area Organiser. However, Blumhardt writes in "The Place of Art and Craft in educational Reform" that she was appointed National Advisor in Art and Craft – *The Beeby Fascicles*, No.2. Wellington, Te Aro Press, 1992 p. 47. Although both Beeby (*The Biography of and Idea*, 1992) and his biographer Noeline Alcorn (*To the Fullest extent of His Powers*, 1999) and Blumhardt's biographer, Marion McLeod (*Doreen Blumhardt: Teacher and Potter*, 1991) refer to Blumhardt's work at Waterloo, neither of these authors mention the title of her position while she was there, or during the years she worked in an itinerant capacity.

They found themselves so engrossed in art and craft activities that they could lose some of their inhibitions and they enjoyed the experience of painting and making things with their hands. To see these men – all men at this time of course, become as little children, able shyly to enjoy activities they had never before experienced, I know made a deep impression.<sup>35</sup>

In 1949, in need of a change of pace, Blumhardt applied for a year's leave to study art and craft education in England and Europe. While she was in England, Beeby asked Blumhardt to represent New Zealand in Paris at the first UNESCO conference on art education together with James Shelley. She used this opportunity to share the progress New Zealand had made in art and craft education and to learn more about the progressive ideas of the other 28 countries represented. She said:

It seemed the countries of war-torn Europe and Britain as well as the USA and Canada were all eager for their children to be part of a future embodying 'Education Through Art'. This was the title of Sir Herbert Read's book published in 1942, which had been such a great inspiration to Dr. Beeby and to me, in implementing the art scheme in the primary schools.<sup>36</sup>

On her return in 1951, Blumhardt was asked to relieve for Roland Hipkins as head of the art department at Wellington Teachers College. Following Hipkin's death she won, over 14 other applicants, the position of head of department, which she was to hold for the next twenty-one years. Artist and former art adviser, Jeanne Macaskill, who was a student at this time, remembers Doreen's arrival at the college:

Doreen arrived hot from Paris, I shall never forget it. The first class sitting at a very long table in the art room, she said, "People in New Zealand just don't know what colour is. Look, I've brought back all these postcards" and she threw, she sort of threw them down, like that, just a pile of them, just threw them down. Brilliant Matisse's, Derain, Signac, the fauves, and the expressionists. And she said, "Look at that for colour. Who paints pictures like that in New Zealand? Nobody. You've got to think about colour and you've got to get excited." And *she* was excited!<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Blumhardt, 1992, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, Jeanne Macaskill, December 2005.

## *The 1945 Tentative Art Scheme*

In 1944, recognising the urgent need for revision of the 1929 Art syllabus, Beeby organised a committee to prepare a new scheme for the teaching of art in the primary school. The committee consisted of art lecturers from the four training colleges, J A Masterton from Christchurch and three of the La Trobe Scheme artists: Roland Hipkins from Wellington, J D C Edgar from Auckland and Tovey from Dunedin, who chaired the committee. Walter Harris, supervisor of Teaching Aids, worked on the review, as did Blumhardt who was the only woman in the group. Their efforts resulted in the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme for Primary Schools, which became known as ‘the grey book’.<sup>38</sup> The purpose of the scheme was to update the syllabus in view of the vast changes in ideas and practice of art education that had occurred in the previous decade, changes which the introduction stated, made it “necessary for the whole problem to be considered anew”.<sup>39</sup>

It is noteworthy that the scheme dealt only with graphic arts and did not include crafts. The rationale provided was that “at the moment it is necessary to think out clearly the teaching of art and design”. This was because the considerable work of Blumhardt and Williams had apparently already established the importance of craft in the minds of teachers and educational administrators. In the new Scheme art and handwork were not viewed as separate subjects and teachers were encouraged to conceptualise and teach these in a unified way:

...There should be no clear division between art and handwork: they should be closely inter-related: good handwork is impossible without consideration of design and colour. Art work to many becomes meaningful only when it is involved in the production of something of practical use.<sup>40</sup>

The ‘Objectives’ statement provides a useful window into the philosophy behind the Scheme:

Perhaps the greatest value of art work is the opportunity it gives for the child’s personal, aesthetic, and spiritual development. A certain piece of work may be personally satisfying to the child; he has his own way of

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<sup>38</sup> Collinge, 1978, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, “*A Tentative Art Scheme for Primary Schools*,” (Wellington: Government Printer, 1945), preface.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

trying to express things. The teacher's too obvious help or direction may only produce feelings of frustration in the child and hinder his development. Free art in school really means freedom from teacher dominance; the teacher's task is one of subtle guidance and encouragement...the school... is concerned with three things – opportunity for self-expression, appreciation of beauty, and the acquirement of skill.<sup>41</sup>

The scheme was regarded as experimental and not intended for general distribution. It was given to teacher training college lecturers, teachers attending refresher courses and those who were interested in trying out new methods. The programme was divided into two parts for each classroom, design work and interpretive work. Design work included lettering, poster designing, simple perspective, geometrical and architectural drawing. Interpretive work gave an “opportunity for expression beyond what can be expressed in words”.<sup>42</sup> Interpretive work is described as follows:

It is in young children a natural mode of expression by which they can state their ideas and feelings, their sometimes unconscious attitudes of mind, and half-remembered emotional and intellectual experiences. It provides for some children an outlet for emotions necessary for normal development. Through interpretive work children become more clearly aware of their environment; through expressing what they feel and know about it they will adjust themselves to environment more adequately. Through this adjustment they strengthen their personalities.<sup>43</sup>

### **Theoretical Influences**

The new art Scheme marked a turn away from previous art schemes, which emphasised skill in copying in a realist fashion, towards art as a natural mode of expression in children. While the three stated objectives of the scheme, “opportunity for self-expression, appreciation of beauty, and the acquirement of skill” would have satisfied traditionalists and progressives alike, the influence of the new education could be seen in the focus on individual personality and the idea of self-expression as a way of strengthening this. In an article on the new syllabus in the journal *Education*, Tovey echoed Froebel's view of education as a process of making what is internal, explicit and outward:

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

...Education is primarily an education of the individual, and I believe it can be developed successfully only through the unfolding of the individual's creative powers.<sup>44</sup>

The view of art as providing “an outlet for emotions necessary for normal development” and as a medium for children to express their “ideas and feelings, their sometimes unconscious attitudes of mind, and half-remembered emotional and intellectual experiences,”<sup>45</sup> is clearly shaped by the ideas of the new psychology. When it is accepted, as the Scheme suggests, that the “really important thing is the child's own mental processes” and the “development of a suitable attitude of mind” and that the teacher “should not place too great an importance on art achievement,” then, the problem for teachers becomes one of how to assess art work and on what basis.<sup>46</sup> These are two fundamental questions that the art scheme attempts to address.

In order to assess children's self-expressive art work on anything other than a subjective basis, it was necessary to devise a system of classifying children's drawings and if children were to develop their own personalities through self-expression, some kind of guide to personality types was also necessary. Answers to these two questions were found in the Cleveland Museum of Art study of children's art abilities in 1936, and in Read's theory of personality types in his book *Education Through Art* (1943), both of which are acknowledged in the 1945 Scheme. The Scheme is primarily a synthesis of these two works, supported by a study of the art abilities of 700 Dunedin children, organised by Tovey and inspired by the Cleveland study.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Cleveland Study**

Thomas Munro writes that the researchers of the Cleveland Study were well aware of the danger of an art ability test which would assume an advance knowledge of what good art is and then attempt to measure against this norm. They sought instead to find some procedure by which art education *as a process* could be evaluated along carefully thought out lines that avoided the extremes of rigid scientific measurement and vaguely defined

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<sup>44</sup> New Zealand School Publications Branch, *Education*, vol. 1 (Wellington: Government Printer, 1949), p. 128.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 128

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> With support from the Otago Education Board the study of children's art ability based on the Cleveland project was trialled in Arthur St School in Dunedin. This was well received and the results captured the interest of the Board who recommended that Tovey extend the study to include the Normal School and the High St School. See Henderson, 1998, pp. 84-85.



subjective judgement.<sup>48</sup> In the Cleveland study 1015 children in the Museum of Art's Saturday art classes were asked to make drawings on seven set topics, the first four of which were analysed.<sup>49</sup> The results of the study showed that the development of children's drawings fell into five different stages: (1) primitive schematic stage; (2) the fully developed schematic stage; (3) the mixed schematic stage (intermediate between schematic and true-to-appearance); (4) the true-to-appearance; (5) the perspective stage. The evidence suggested that not all individuals, even adults beginning drawing, pass through each of these stages, but that no individual can advance to a later stage without passing through the earlier stages in essentially this order.<sup>50</sup>

The pedagogical implications of these findings were that an understanding of the naturally occurring schematic stages in children's development of art abilities offered teachers a way of extending these particular stages without pushing the child towards visual realism and, further, that these stages could be used to aid in other phases of mental development.<sup>51</sup> That is, in teaching and learning, an indication of a child's schematic stage or 'aesthetic age' could be useful in much the same way as a 'mental age'.<sup>52</sup> Read's thesis that art should be the basis of education rests on such an idea of integration and co-ordination between mental and aesthetic development. He argues, "[i]t is only in so far as these senses are brought into harmonious and habitual relationship with the external world that an integrated personality is built up."<sup>53</sup>

Drawing on the results of the Cleveland study, the 1945 Art Syllabus classified children's drawings into four categories: Primitive schematic 5-7 yrs, schematic 7-9 yrs, mixed

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Munro, *Art Education Its Philosophy and Psychology: Selected Essays* (New York: The Bobs-Merrill Company Inc., 1956), p. 210.

<sup>49</sup> The four topics analysed were:

1. Make a picture of whatever you like best to draw.
2. Draw a picture of a man.
3. Make a picture showing just how your classroom looks while the children and the teacher are there.
4. Make a picture showing what you would like to do next summer.

One of these topics (the one Tovey also used for his survey) was the task of drawing a human figure.<sup>49</sup> Known as the "draw-a-man test" this method was developed by American psychologist Florence Goodenough (1886-1959) in 1926. It was one of the first non-verbal IQ tests used for preschool and primary school aged children. Goodenough was not interested in aesthetics per se, but viewed children's drawings as providing a window into their mental processes, based on the belief that children "draw what they know - not what they see."

For the organisation the 'Seven Drawing Test' and the exact questions used see Munro, 1956, pp. 213-218; also, Betty Lark-Horovitz and James Norton, "Children's Art Abilities: Developmental Trends of Art Characteristics," *Child Development* 30, no. 4 (1959).

<sup>50</sup> Munro, 1956, pp. 222-23.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>53</sup> Read, *Education through Art*. p. 7.

schematic 9-11 yrs, and resemblance 15 yrs.<sup>54</sup> In this scheme, the four different schematic types of development in art are matched by Tovey with eight emotional or personality groupings for further classification.

## Herbert Read

The personality groupings in the 1945 scheme are drawn from Read's system in *Education Through Art*. Read arrived at his personality groupings after undertaking a survey of "several thousand" children's drawings, made possible by a two-year fellowship from the University of London in 1940.<sup>55</sup> His aim was to do a purely stylistic assessment of children's drawings and to see if this corresponded to Jung's classifications of personality or function types. Jung's eightfold typology of function types, includes four types of personalities: thinking, feeling, sensation and intuitive. Each of these personalities can also be extroverted or introverted; for example, thinking-extroverted, thinking-introverted. Jung believed that these types were innately determined and that people were often a blend of types, with one type usually dominant. Read's interest in the psychological constitution of children was based on his view of the artist as a mediator between individual consciousness and the collective unconscious.<sup>56</sup> His biographer, James King, writes that Read believed:

If individuals and nations could build upon a common heritage of symbols and dreams, perhaps there could be a glimmer of hope for civilisation. In order for the world of the archetypes to find positive expression, every child had to become an artist and art had to be moved to the centre of the educational curriculum, a place which it had never occupied in most educational philosophies.<sup>57</sup>

Through his analysis of children's work, Read found that their drawings could be classified into clearly defined stylistic categories. He then assessed these eight categories against British philosopher Edward Bullough's four types of aesthetic appreciation—objective type, physiological type, associative type and character type as well as Jung's four types.<sup>58</sup> He established that although none of the types or categories existed in a pure state, they did seem to indicate a predominant temperament and personality in the

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<sup>54</sup> For a full description of the type of drawing each stage represents see (Appendix C).

<sup>55</sup> Read, 1958, p. 40.

<sup>56</sup> James King, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 169.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>58</sup> Edward Bullough (1880-1934) is best known for his essay "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle" which appeared in the *British Journal of Psychology* in 1912.

individual, which could be identified in their modes of expression, a fact which he saw as of “enormous potential value for the theory and practice of education”.<sup>59</sup> Read’s categories of personality types were adapted for the 1945 curriculum by Tovey as follows: (1) Realistic, (2) Impressionistic, (3) Emotive, (4) Over Emphatic (haptic), (5) Decorative, (6) Fanciful (7) Rhythmic (8) Constructive.<sup>60</sup>

The 1945 Scheme refers teachers to Read’s *Education Through Art* for full definitions of the different styles. It states that while one style is not better than another, “it is educationally sound to encourage children to develop their own particular style.” Further, “[i]t is likely that children who are encouraged to develop their own style of drawing will reach a higher level of drawing ability and that this is connected with the development of personality.”<sup>61</sup>

The idea that children’s art expression is closely bound up with their growth was also advanced by Viktor Lowenfeld in *The Nature of Creative Activity* and his textbook, *Creative and Mental Growth*.<sup>62</sup> Unlike Jung and Bullough who based their classifications on a four- and eight-fold system, Lowenfeld focussed on only two: haptic (meaning kinaesthetic and tactile) and visual. Lowenfeld’s work was significant because his research with blind and partially sighted students seemed to demonstrate so emphatically that these two different types of aesthetic conception in art expression are not sight-dependent, but inherent. His conclusions supported Read and Jung’s view that children’s particular drawing schemata represent their innate psychological constitutions.<sup>63</sup> Both Read and Tovey made use of Lowenfeld’s haptic category in their systems of classification. Although he did not acknowledge Lowenfeld directly, Tovey explained his visual and haptic classification for teachers in a 1949 edition of the journal *Education*, writing:

The roots from which the characteristics of these two distinct groups spring lie deep in the personality of the individual, and strangely enough they have little to do with sight, for the work in sculpture of persons totally blind from birth can quite easily be classified into either group.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Read, 1943, pp. 150, 158.

<sup>60</sup> Read’s eight categories were: Organic, Empathetic, Rhythmical, Pattern, Structural Form, Enumerative-Haptic, Decorative, Imaginative.

<sup>61</sup> New Zealand School Publications Branch, *Education*, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup> Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth*; Viktor Lowenfeld, *The Nature of Creative Activity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952).

<sup>63</sup> Lowenfeld, 1939, p. xvii.

<sup>64</sup> Gordon Tovey, “Art in Primary Schools,” *Education* 2, no. 4, (1949).

Lowenfeld's text book on art education, *The Nature of Creative Activity*, like Read's *Education Through Art*, was widely read by art and craft advisers and had a significant influence on New Zealand teachers' ideas about the development of children's artistic abilities. Read visited New Zealand in 1954 and met Tovey and staff from the Art and Craft Branch.<sup>65</sup>

The new art scheme was implemented with the assistance of third year art specialists from teachers' colleges and Senior Specialist Area Organisers in Art and Crafts.<sup>66</sup> Collinge notes that importance of the 1945 art scheme lay in the fact that it was based on some of the most contemporary work in the field and marked an important step in bringing New Zealand art education into line with international developments in child art.<sup>67</sup> In its emphasis on children's individual abilities and personalities and in the scope it provided for qualitative assessment within this, the scheme had a breadth of outlook that was new to art education in the primary school.

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<sup>65</sup> Read is also known in New Zealand for the preface he wrote to Sylvia Ashton-Warner's autobiographical book *Teacher* (1963).

<sup>66</sup> Collinge, 1978, p. 29.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

## Chapter 7: The Birth of the Art and Craft Branch

### *The Art and Craft Branch*

The development of physical education and art and craft education in schools was not so much an attempt to introduce worthy subjects into the curriculum as it was part of a broader aim by the Department of Education to break down the barriers between the school and the community. The Education Emergency Scheme had already demonstrated the great potential of such an interrelationship. In this sense tackling the ‘frills’ of the curriculum as the first areas for reform, as Beeby did, was an effort to liberalise the curriculum, but also to address what he saw as the “isolation” of conventional education. The emphasis on the development of physical education and art and crafts was an acknowledgment of the importance these social and cultural activities play in bringing communities together. Implicit in Beeby’s focus on the ‘frills’ of education was a challenge to ideas about the aims and purposes of the traditional core subjects in the curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

The success of Sam Williams’ and Blumhardt’s work had confirmed for Beeby that art and craft education could be successfully developed along the same lines as Smithell’s work in physical education and on a broader, community-orientated scale. Accordingly, the primary school initiative was developed in tandem with adult and community education initiatives. The most influential of these was the Community Arts Service (CAS), which was run under the auspices of the National Council of Adult Education. The CAS was a vigorous attempt to provide an adult education service on a national scale and led to the establishment of local committees and organisations which sponsored art exhibitions, film societies, drama, music, sketching and painting clubs.<sup>2</sup> By 1951, the service had grown to involve over 221,000 people with theatre productions providing the

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<sup>1</sup> Although Beeby was not speaking about the New Zealand educational context, his “Man of Education Address” delivered to the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Education Institute, sheds light on his thinking about the reforms he initiated while he was Director of Education. His paper titled, “Which are the Frills in Education,” was delivered at the Branch Centennial Dinner, July 26, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *New Zealand Adult Education*, p. 127.

main source of revenue to support smaller enterprises such as chamber music and art exhibitions.<sup>3</sup> The primary function of the National Council of Adult Education was the cultivation of the arts.<sup>4</sup> It was run by people with a history of involvement in community and arts education such as H C D Somerset from the Fielding Community Centre, G T Alley from the National Library Service, James Shelley as Director of Broadcasting and Beeby as Director of Education.<sup>5</sup>

Having been impressed by Tovey's work on the 1945 art scheme, Beeby appointed him as National Supervisor of Art and Craft in 1946, a newly formed position that Tovey was to hold until his retirement in 1966. The focus in the first years of the Branch remained on introducing the crafts that had been most successful in the Emergency Schooling Scheme and in the demonstration schools: spinning, weaving, pottery, bookbinding and fabric printing. The utilitarian nature of these crafts made a favourable impression on principals who were able to justify making room in the curriculum for the production of useful things. As a painter and poet himself, Tovey was more interested in painting and free expressive work than in crafts, and as time progressed he placed greater emphasis on these subjects. On the whole, principals needed more convincing to incorporate these activities and the enthusiasm they felt for craft activities sometimes evaporated in the face of their objections to what they called 'airy fairy stuff.' Peter Smith, who was appointed as an art adviser in the first year of operation, recalls that the work in the first few years of development was both "satisfying and difficult:"

Satisfying because we did get exciting results – to us at least! Difficult because many principals and teachers had little or no sympathy with what we were wanting to do, and allowed us entry to classrooms somewhat grudgingly. I recall a grizzled and to me overbearing deputy principal who as I finished a lesson told the students to 'tear up that rubbish so we can get on with some real work'! But he later became one of my staunchest supporters in that school, as he came to realise both the satisfaction students obtained, and the often vibrant and intriguing and original work they were capable of.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> In 1948 the National Council of Adult Education purchased 40 original works by New Zealand artists to form a collection to tour all of the main cities. The thirty pictures that featured in the travelling exhibition were for sale and as these were sold new works were bought to fill these spaces (Hall, 1970, p. 131).

<sup>5</sup> The functions of the National Council of Adult Education under the 1947 Act were: (1) To promote and foster adult education and the cultivation of the Arts; (2) To make recommendations to the Minister on the amount of the annual grant to be made to the National Council for adult education out of monies appropriated by Parliament for that purpose, and to receive and administer and control the expenditure of all monies granted to the Council as aforesaid. Adult Education Act, 1947, Clause 9, see (Hall, 1970, p.101).

<sup>6</sup> Peter Smith, Per. Com., August 26, 2005.

The structure of the Art and Crafts Branch was well thought out with art and craft specialists employed in a ranked career structure that progressed from ‘Organisers’, to ‘Assistant Area Organisers’ to ‘District Organisers’.<sup>7</sup> As well, ‘Secondary Organisers’ worked in a post-primary school liaison role and often got together with District Organisers to work in primary schools.<sup>8</sup> The Secondary Organisers included fine art graduates such as Jim Allen, John Ritchie, Dick Seelye, Vic Grey, Selwyn Wilson, and Arnold Wilson. In his archival record of the arts and crafts specialist staff, Roger Hardie, who was a District Organiser in the Branch, observes that these professional artists brought “a mature depth of understanding of the artistic process to the current thinking and practice”.<sup>9</sup>

The policy of hiring staff who were committed to developing their own art practice also applied to graduates from teachers colleges, who were ‘hand picked’ by Tovey for an extra third year of art training. The national third year programme of training for art specialists began in 1949 and was directed by Murray Stevenson at Dunedin Teachers College. This programme ran for 14 years until 1962 and at its height there were over 100 art advisers working as itinerant specialists in art in primary schools.<sup>10</sup> Graduates include well-known New Zealand artists Ralph Hotere, Marilyn Webb, Katerina Mataira, Sandy Adsett, John Bevan Ford, Cliff Whiting, and Clive Aldridge. Jill Smith observed that the third year of training provided a unique opportunity for personal development:

Tovey’s philosophy of self-discovery and inherent creativity was a highly attractive one. It promised that without having to endure the European academy style, skill-based three years at an art school, they could become not only good teachers of art, but artists. Further, the advisers were fully resourced with art material and equipment, and Tovey ensured, often to the ire of his department colleagues, that they had time for personal work and research. Of the utmost importance, particularly for Maori advisers were the opportunities Tovey provided for them to meet and work together.<sup>11</sup>

Sandy Adsett found the strength of Tovey’s policy of recruiting Maori art advisers lay in the opportunities it provided for the development of a community of Maori artists:

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<sup>7</sup> Hardie, 2005, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Hardie, 2005 p. 8; Blumhardt, 1992, p. 52

<sup>11</sup> Jill Elizabeth Smith, “The Impact of the Recruitment of Maori Art Advisers by the Department of Education Upon the Evolution of Contemporary Maori Artists and Art” (M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1992), p. 22.

We grew with the influence of each other, and through our gatherings, into a commitment to be artists...to be able to support each other...it was a catalyst to enable a group of artists to share a growing urgent need to express themselves as Maori, with art, to Maori.<sup>12</sup>

The concentration of developing artists and the community-orientated structure of the programme created a fertile environment for artists to develop their own work. Marilyn Webb recalls:

Gordon chose people for his art training because of their art ability... we were expected to work on our own work and to give back our knowledge to teachers and students...I worked in Auckland and North Auckland with groups of art advisers in what is now called performance, installation and dance...and in all sorts of areas like clay, construction...and weaving...it was very exciting. As advisers we were based in Auckland and used the advisers' art room as a studio....It was group exploral [*sic*]. When I look back on that period (1955-65) I see the programme's Jungian emphasis, with the outcome being a huge body of committed art educators, as well as a breeding ground for professional artists...it was a doing and making programme...I feel very privileged to have been part of it.<sup>13</sup>

The Branch grew quickly and soon there were a number of art specialists visiting schools and working closely with teachers in their classrooms. Teachers were released from their schools to attend refresher courses and supplied with ample materials, which were greatly appreciated after the war shortages. Another appeal of the scheme for teachers was that unlike inspectors who had the potential to affect their grading and therefore their careers, art advisers were able to provide genuine mentoring for professionally lonely teachers. Teachers often formed close friendships with advisers and confided in them in ways they would not have with an inspector. This was especially the case in isolated schools. Roger Hardie recalls the intense nature of this itinerant work:

[It was] very exhausting for specialists with long travel and long days, talking into the night in school houses, pubs, wherever, about all sorts of things, educational mostly and much of that on aspects of creative education, going far beyond art and crafts...the effect was considerable – it changed the way teachers saw education across the board. And those country school teachers doing their 'country service' who were converted, soon passed on to positions of responsibility in big city

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<sup>12</sup> Sandy Adsett in J. Smith, 1992, p. 134.

<sup>13</sup> Marilyn Webb, cited in J Smith, 1992, p. 102.



schools so the effect of that missionary effort was reasonably immediate.<sup>14</sup>

### *Art Advisers and Community Education*

Following his belief that the activities of the school should be intimately related to the wider community, Beeby encouraged art advisers to carry their work out into adult education programmes and night classes. Jeanne Macaskill remembers Beeby urging, “‘It’s no good doing this great experimental education with children unless you move the adults along too.’ We were taught that art belonged in the whole community, and that part of our role was to bring it in to the community,” she said. Jim Allen, for example, ran adult evening classes at several schools and also worked with artists Colin McCahon and Louise Henderson running classes in sculpture at the Auckland City Art Gallery. He later was director of adult education for summer schools at the University of Auckland and recalls a great enthusiasm for these programmes. Peter Smith remarked on the level of interest:

I think a lot of us were involved in quite a lot of adult education work, and courses of one sort or another...I remember years where I worked with the adult education unit in Auckland, part time after work and in the weekends and so on running screen printing courses and pottery courses and there was a real *hunger* for it. There really was. I suppose we are talking about a limited sector, although I remember going to country districts and there were all these people turning out – they were amazing.<sup>15</sup>

Blumhardt also ran regular weekend workshops, evening classes, participated in summer schools and played an important role in bringing New Zealand children’s art and craft work before international audiences. As well as presenting with Shelley to the first art and craft education conference in Paris in 1949, she was invited to participate in an international exhibition of children’s art in Germany as part of the Goethe Bicentenary where the New Zealand entries in the exhibition generated considerable interest.<sup>16</sup> While in Germany, Blumhardt was asked to speak at a conference of art teachers held in Hesse a few weeks later. McLeod writes that Blumhardt had taken along with her a good display of children’s work which demonstrated her philosophy: “That all children [should] be given an uninhibited means of expression through art, and thus be able to build confidence

<sup>14</sup> Roger Hardie, Per. Com., June 1, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Smith Interview, August 10, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Marion McLeod, Brian Brake, and Doreen Blumhardt, *Doreen Blumhardt: Teacher & Potter* (Wellington, N.Z.: Daphne Brasell Associates Press, 1991), p. 15.

and creativity into all aspects of their daily lives.” Blumhardt observed: “The Germans were really interested. There were tears running down their faces. Afterwards they mobbed me: how could they come to New Zealand? They were so overwhelmed by the atmosphere of freedom conveyed.”<sup>17</sup>

At a UNESCO conference on adult education in 1983, Macaskill recalls New Zealand being held up as a model for success in adult education in art and craft with the country’s world-renowned level of pottery used as an example of a successful program:

At that time New Zealand was a world leader in pottery. We had fantastic potters! And they said this would never have happened, had not there been such good adult education in pottery. Thirty to thirty-one thousand people attended night classes in pottery a year in the 70s – this was according to their figures ... They said it’s not that everyone in those classes became potters, but they became supporters and appreciators... the continuing education movement built up the audience for pottery, and again it was a movement based on creativity.

### **Art Appreciation**

On a national level, art gallery directors also noticed a change in the level of art appreciation in the years following the expansion of art and craft in schools. Smith, for example, recalls:

I used to talk to the gallery directors that I knew in Auckland and they'd say... “It’s amazing Peter what’s happening, these kids are coming in to the galleries tugging their parents along and explaining the work to them.” Rodney Kirk-Smith and Barry Lett...said that to me often, they said, “This is a revolution, you know...It’s fascinating to watch them talking to their parents saying, ‘This is what it’s about dad or this is what it’s about mum.’ ” And so that was an interesting offshoot...<sup>18</sup>

Exhibitions of children’s art also played an important role in shifting public attitudes towards art at a time when many people had never been to an art exhibition before. In 1949, an Auckland exhibition of children’s art and craft work drew a record crowd of 22,000 people over the space of three weeks. The same year, the New Zealand Child Art Exhibition attracted large numbers in Wanganui, Fielding and Palmerston North.<sup>19</sup> Annual exhibitions were sponsored by newspapers and run by art advisers who were charged with

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Smith, Interview, August 10, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> *AJHR*, E-2, 1949, p. 2.

promoting and explaining the aims and purposes of the new art and craft education to parents and the general public. Macaskill found that learning how to promote children's art work at parent-teacher evenings and exhibitions was an integral part of the role:

You were arguing a cause, just like you were fighting the principals in their offices who wished you weren't in the school...a lot of the principals I met in the 1950s had been born in 1900, and they grew up in that arid time for the arts...when we came along and started to do our freewheeling stuff those men were up in arms you know...They were in their fifties and change is hard for them...Those art works that curled up in the sun while they were up in the passageways and started to become unstuck and fluttered in the breeze, they were nuisances in tidy schools. I could understand that. And a lot of the parents were the same. We were zealots really...you had to learn to be an advocate.<sup>20</sup>

Under Departmental regulations, principals were strongly encouraged to accommodate one visit by art advisers whether they were wanted or not.<sup>21</sup> With the arrival of an art adviser, particularly at small or isolated schools, the daily programme was usurped by a day of art and craft activities. For many of the principals who viewed these activities as frills, it was an unwelcome intrusion which displaced proper learning of core subjects. The fact there was often a thirty- or forty-year age difference between the newly graduated art advisers and the principals they hoped to 'convert' to the new art and craft methods, at times seemed to only widen the gulf to be traversed. Roger Hardie observed that in terms of exerting a liberalizing influence on the curriculum, these school visits acted as "the thin end of the wedge" in breaking up the normal pattern of the school day and creating more flexible programs.<sup>22</sup>

When making a case for the new kinds of art and craft activities in schools, art specialists emphasised the opportunities the new art provided for furthering children's individual development. They argued that for the younger children in particular it created an opportunity for them to express themselves in ways that they were often not able to with words. Artistic activity was one of the ways a society learns to understand itself, they maintained, and making art in schools made children happier, more integrated and gave them a greater sense of belonging at school.<sup>23</sup> At some of the exhibitions, art advisers

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<sup>20</sup> Jeanne Macaskill, Interview, December 10, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Roger Hardie, Per. Com., June 1, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Roger Hardie, Interview, August 10, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Jeanne Macaskill, Per. Com., May 11, 2006.

prepared questions that they set beside the children's art work to stimulate further discussion amongst parents and the public.

Peter Smith found that it was not until he travelled abroad that he realised that what was happening in New Zealand schools was unique. He saw that although countries like the United States were producing excellent theorists at this time, at a school level the work was either generally way behind the times or teachers had never heard of theorists like Lowenfeld or Eisner. New Zealand art and craft education during these years, he said, "really took a great leap forward" and has had a significant influence on the development of art and crafts in New Zealand in the years since. Most importantly, he suggests, it brought the children's art home to their parents who became caught with it, and through this link it established a remarkable climate of appreciation.

### ***Tovey's Philosophy: Opportunities and Contestations***

Tovey was an inspirational orator who put very little of his educational philosophy in writing. It was a philosophy that staff recall as being more 'caught than taught.' Peter Smith describes Tovey's philosophy as a "quasi-mystical, psychological interpretation of the writing of Freud, Spengler and Jung... which emphasised emotion and feeling over intellect".<sup>24</sup> Tovey believed that "western civilisation had become over intellectualised and that the natural well-springs of innate drives had dried up."<sup>25</sup> It was through the arts, Tovey held, that the "falsified imbalance" between objective and subjective learning could be corrected and the rightful balance found between the inward and the outward affinities and capabilities of human beings.<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, Tovey's view of art teaching was that it must draw on the "innate capabilities of the individual" and "tap subconscious as well as conscious levels; then, only when students were ready, would techniques be useful". The soundest method of approach towards teaching art he believed was a psychological one.<sup>27</sup> This view was clearly manifested in the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme in the emphasis on different

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Smith, Per. Com., August 26, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Henderson 1998, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Gordon Tovey, "The Creative World," in *The Creative Arts* (Wellington: New Zealand Educational Institute, 1976), p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> Tovey, 1949, p. 38.

personality types and the view that through imaginative and interpretive work children would “adjust themselves to environment more adequately” and thereby “strengthen their personalities”.<sup>28</sup> Tovey’s view of children’s art as emphasising the imaginative rather than the real, the subjective over the objective was firmly anchored in the expressive aesthetic tradition. He saw children’s art as being primarily concerned with the child’s state of mind and feelings rather than their perceptions of external reality:

What children remember best about their experiences are not the factual details of what happened, but their own feelings. For this reason the teacher should try to bring the child back to the memory of those feelings...It should be emphasised that with most children any realistic approach is still unconscious and that in the main they will share a love for action and for dramatisation.<sup>29</sup>

Tovey’s emphasis on the affective and the expressive stood in marked contrast to the South Kensington approach to art teaching, a system that he believed “involved the imposition of external techniques which in many instances stultified individual expression” and which he had already begun moving away from while teaching at the King Edward Technical College in the 1930s.<sup>30</sup>

Instead of focussing on the teaching of practical techniques as in the South Kensington model, Tovey believed the main function of the art teacher was “to free the child from as many inhibiting factors as possible” so that the child’s confidence in his own “powers of expression” would be built up.<sup>31</sup> He held that to “ensure a secure foundation for the development of personality it is necessary to help children to give birth to their own spontaneous ideas”. His view of the teacher as midwife to the child’s ideas and thereby to the development of their personality meant that he saw the role of art advisers as ‘motivating’ and ‘stimulating’ children towards authentic creative self expression rather than teaching. To facilitate this process, Tovey recommended that art specialists prepare students for art lessons through ‘motivations,’ that is, by reading aloud and/or enacting a story based on myth, legend, or experiences from the children’s own lives that they could relate to.<sup>32</sup> When the children arrived, Macaskill said, the teachers would “exaggerate

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<sup>28</sup> New Zealand School Publications Branch, *Education*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Gordon Tovey, “Art in Primary Schools - How to Begin,” *Education* 2, no. 1 (1949), pp. 34, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> Tovey, 1949, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> An example of a motivation for a painting lesson provided by Tovey in his booklet *Children’s Painting* (1972), is included in (Appendix D).

some drama, the haunted house, the black night, the crocodiles in the river ... things that would stir the kids' imagination".<sup>33</sup> Macaskill recalls Tovey's advice on how to approach the lessons:

...He gave us a special message; and the message was, 'Let the child grow, let the child be itself. Don't impose. ...Present, stimulate, motivate – 'motivate' was a favourite word, motivate the child's imagination. Get the child going and thinking and dreaming and then paint it.'<sup>34</sup>

Tovey's belief in the need for children's art to arise from their own imaginative world and experiences meant that, like Cizek, he was also opposed to children being shown adult art or introduced to adult concepts. For example, he specifically advised teachers not to teach linear perspective,<sup>35</sup> and "openly opposed" an offer by Beeby to purchase slides of artworks from European galleries for the Branch while he was in Paris.<sup>36</sup> Like Cizek, Tovey also believed that child art should not be corrupted by adult influence, a view that shaped his ideas about teaching practices and the place of art appreciation in art education.

### ***Subterranean Teaching***

Tovey's orientation towards indirect instruction proved challenging for some of his staff who were imbued with enthusiasm but struggled to find ways of 'motivating' without actually 'teaching.' Merv Holland, who worked closely with Tovey in the Art and Craft Branch head office, states that art advisers responded to this in different ways:

Some teachers "caught" these new insights and enthusiasms and skilfully wove them into their own framework of teaching, (whilst often hotly denying that they were teaching). Others were lost because they believed too implicitly that where creative art was concerned one did not need to teach, or they found the concepts so elusive and ill-defined that they had little on which to grasp. Others again just did not believe that learning was the outcome of inward growth or maturation alone, and staggered on feeling guilty about their place in the new revolution. Some never left the path of rigidly instructing children in limited adult concepts of art.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Jeanne Macaskill, interview, December, 10, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Tovey, 1949, p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> Henderson, 1998, pp. 154-5.

<sup>37</sup> Mervyn Holland, "Three Thoughts," in *The Creative Arts* (Wellington: The New Zealand Educational Institute, 1976), p. 115-116.

Peter Smith, who was a liaison organiser for the Branch at this time, reflects on his own experience:

I, and I am sure many other art advisors overtly or covertly, became frustrated by what appeared to be an injunction upon non-interference, and found our own ways of motivating students by discussing and exploring with them their experiences of things and events, by suggesting how they might begin with an indication on their paper of the main features they wanted to include, and how these might be developed with colour, line or texture. But in a curious way I think we were rather secretive about this ‘instruction’!<sup>38</sup>

Roger Hardie, also a liaison organiser, considers that the concept of standards which lay behind Tovey’s enthusiasm was the least understood aspect of the approach and led to the “mistaken idea that teachers should not ‘crimp someone’s creative expression.’”<sup>39</sup> However, underneath the freedom, he maintains, was actually a demand for quality, which was not understood by the general public or even all art specialists. It was through this kind of misunderstanding that the pejorative term the ‘playway in education’ came in.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Medium and the Message*

Although Tovey had a love of poetic language and a remarkable capacity with people, staff recall that he often had great difficulty explaining in critical terms what he himself understood about children and learning.<sup>41</sup> He very rarely put things in writing and had a strong anti-intellectual bias against explication and analysis. Staff working alongside Tovey in the head office found that he was not only unreceptive to attempts to try and work out a solid basis for his ideas but had a tendency to view critical discussions, questioning and suggestions as personally undermining. Henderson explores these issues in some detail in her biography of Tovey.<sup>42</sup> Holland who worked most closely with Tovey, and was often charged with putting his ideas into writing, found:

People really enjoyed Gordon because he was a very open, quite poetic sort of a person...but when it came to a discussion that was going to get more to the *heart* of something ...and work something out that could be

<sup>38</sup> Peter Smith, Per. Com., August 26, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Hardie, interview, August 10, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> The ‘Playway’ in education and ‘Beebyism’ were used by conservative critics to describe everything that they believed to be wrong with education under Beeby’s reforms. See, Noeline Alcorn, *To the Fullest Extent of His Powers: C.E. Beeby’s Life in Education* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999), p. 141.

<sup>41</sup> See Alan McIntyre, “A Tribute to Gordon Tovey” in Hardie, 2005, p. 92.

<sup>42</sup> Carol Henderson, *A Blaze of Colour: Gordon Tovey Artist Educator*, Christchurch, Hazard Press, 1998.

put on paper, to present to teachers...words would flow wonderfully, but he had the utmost trouble in, I guess, *disciplining* them...I enjoyed him immensely and respected him, but he became blinded within that thinking capacity...he was not good at making connections between the intellectual and feeling world. The meetings he used to run were a bit like a political meeting ...and the fervour would run very high and he'd tackle some of the rigidities of the system. He often used to talk about *The System*. And, teachers in the hall thought that this was so good because he was knocking down authority, but the thing was, that there was no substitution of anything else for them. So they'd walk out filled with great enthusiasm and then it would just – collapse.<sup>43</sup>

In his early years Holland found that he “floated” along with many others on the strength of Tovey’s oratory, but in the end his demand for openness and substance ultimately put him out of favour with him:

When it came to making a structure to get something going, and continuing it, [the philosophy] didn’t really exist. And I used to say to him, “Well what about if we postulate this as a basis, and if it doesn’t work we just say it’s not working as well as we thought and we need to change it – but that we were open with people” – because this was really what was going on.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately tensions arose as Tovey found that specialists in their own districts were innovating and working out new practical ways of working in a classroom to meet the teachers’ questions but that he was not able to control the direction these adaptations took.

Alan McIntyre recalls, “[a]t the end of Tovey’s poetic utterances, there were never any conclusions, but a nagging question. You were always left with something to work out for yourself.”<sup>45</sup> While this seemed a successful strategy in the lecture theatre, it posed difficulties for art advisers who were trying to convey ideas and methods to teachers for classroom practice. An address titled “The Creative World” published in *The Creative Arts* provides an example of Tovey’s artistic approach to ‘philosophising’ per se, that is, of his predilection to pick up the bright fragment of an idea or theory, and to rework it into his own ideology with an insouciant disregard for traditional intellectual concerns such as the need for a general philosophical consonance with the source.<sup>46</sup> Delivered firstly as an address at an NZEI course in creativity in 1971, three years before his death, the speech

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<sup>43</sup> Merv Holland, Interview, November 20, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Alan McIntyre, in Hardie, 2005, p. 92.

<sup>46</sup> Tovey, “The Creative World.”



may have been an attempt to answer some of the fundamental criticisms that were levelled at his approach to art education. His thesis that “intuitive patterns of learning can be fused with the more formalised and objective undertakings of factual and grammatical learning”<sup>47</sup> addressed the charge increasingly levelled against him that he over-emphasised the intuitive or the affective at the expense of the intellectual.

The following excerpts from Tovey’s address on the importance of emphasising non-verbal modes of expression, serve to illustrate:

So the sun of our accomplishment of our purposefully unspun world of learning enlightens but one side alone, the verbal, while the creative, like the dark side of the moon, recently revealed through adventurous journeying, remains in uncomprehending, non-activating shadow.

On the objective content of things, Tovey writes: “This world is the vibrating world – the self-induced pulsing base awaiting creative teaching...The realisation and satisfaction of meaning is the hidden implanted lure automatically providing revitalisation.” Concluding his speech Tovey urged:

Let us look at our civilization which through its strength has begun journeying into space, while at the same time fighting for its very life; its own induced cancers of pollution and overpopulation – where children are asking the right to carry arms to counter armed teachers – where power has superseded authority – where the mirrors of guidance of the past are smashed in the violence of dissent, and self-discipline willingly submits to the soft kiss of permissiveness. Accepting these factors from which a new morality, bringing stabilisation, must be evolved, perhaps I could conclude with a part from a previous statement – it would at least be appropriate if steps are taken to give recognition to the nature and the learning processes involving thought and feeling in the blend of the duality of the two worlds mentioned. And to have corrected the falsified imbalance of the chosen few against the disregarded many.<sup>48</sup>

To be in the audience at such a meeting was to be inspired, Holland recalls:

I remember sitting absolutely enthralled with things he was talking about and it was only because I was somewhat critical in my thinking that afterwards I’d think, ‘What the hell was that about?’...And no blame... there are people like that, that’s all there is about it. But I think if you are going to get involved in national education, you need to be doing something a bit further beyond that, because there are people who

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<sup>47</sup> Tovey, 1976, p. 27.

<sup>48</sup> Tovey, 1976, pp. 27-39.

are real cynics and people who have not got the background and there's a multiplicity of ways you need to tackle and help those people.<sup>49</sup>

In the above address, Tovey uses Karl Popper's theory of three worlds<sup>50</sup> as a framework for his argument that the "merging of objective and subjective modes of learning" produces more meaningful creative resolutions than the traditional focus on scholarship.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Popper's views on art were diametrically opposed to Tovey's self-expressive credo. Popper believed that the conception of 'art as self expression' was "completely mistaken."<sup>52</sup>

It is *trivially true* that we express our inner state in everything we do, including of course in art. But we express our inner state also in the way we walk, cough, or blow our nose. Self-expression cannot, therefore, be used to characterize art. But I do not merely regard the expressionist theory of art as mistaken. I regard it as having a pernicious and a destructive influence upon art. In great art, the artist considers his *work* as important, rather than himself. This healthy attitude is undermined by the theory that art is self-expression.<sup>53</sup>

Tovey may have been unaware of the mismatch between his own philosophy and that of Popper, or he may have concluded that this was immaterial, or he may have found a connection between his position and Popper's that is more apparent than real. What is noteworthy is the window Tovey's "The Creative World" address offers into his artistic approach towards theorizing and the way it illuminates the challenge his colleagues faced in interpreting his poetic philosophy into strategies for generalist teachers in New Zealand classrooms.

Viewed broadly, although Tovey established his model of art education on the same child-centred basis as Cizek's and shared many of the same beliefs, there were factors in the New Zealand art and craft scheme that resulted in quite different outcomes. For instance,

<sup>49</sup> Merv Holland, Interview, February 15, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Tovey lists Karl Popper's three worlds as follows: -

The first world is the world of objective things.

The second world is the world of the inner subjective self.

The third world is the world of the objective content of things.

In the first and second worlds he suggests, it is possible to use verbal extensions or elaborations to extend the meaning of things. In the third world, which he views as "the world of children," "no verbal extensions or elaborations can increase that meaning." To illustrate this point he cites four remarkable poems by children as examples of the world of objective content or 'completed meaning.' Tovey, 1976, p. 29; Karl Popper, "Three Worlds," in *The Tanner Lecture on Human Values* (University of Michigan 1978).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>52</sup> Karl Popper, April 7, 1978.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

as mentioned previously, teachers abroad who attempted to follow Wilhelm Viola and Francesca's descriptions of Cizek's method were often chagrined to discover that "taking the lid off" and supplying a supportive environment with quality materials did not result in artwork of a similar calibre. Although Tovey conceptualised the role of the teacher in terms very similar to Cizek's, there do not seem to be reports of teachers trialling the new art and failing miserably. On the contrary, records of children's artwork from this period demonstrate a high level of vitality and accomplishment.<sup>54</sup>

Two factors seemed to contribute to this. The first was the broadness of scope of the New Zealand scheme, that is, the fact that it was both an Art and *Crafts* Branch. This gave the movement a solid basis which was from the outset, anchored in the field of applied art. The second was that unlike Viola, Wilson and Dengler, the majority of the people charged with bringing the scheme into New Zealand classrooms were practicing artists themselves. The combination of these two factors seemed to have moderated the more inflated claims of the child-centred expressive art movement and the problems implicit in this model. For instance, the teachers in England who found Cizek's methods unsuccessful in their own classrooms were not artists themselves and relied on Cizek's supporters for their understanding of an expressionist approach to teaching art. In the New Zealand context, by contrast, the people charged with conveying the new methods in art possessed a personal working knowledge of art practice and the creative process. If Tovey's philosophy proved chimerical at times, art specialists were able to fall back on their own expert knowledge and bridge the gaps themselves. In cases where generalist teachers found the recommended dramatic motivations and expressive painting activities beyond their comfort or comprehension they were almost always able to find success and satisfaction through the development of more practical craft activities in their classrooms.

Curiously, in spite of the insulating effect of the specialist staff, the criticism levelled at Cizek by Arthur Efland that, "[h]e knew what child art was supposed to look like, and he knew how to get children to produce it"<sup>55</sup> seemed to have an element of truth in the New Zealand context also. In the first instance, Tovey's interpretation of children's art as not concerned with "factual details" or with a "realistic approach" shaped his approach to materials. Large sheets of paper, bold colours and big brushes were standard issue and lent

<sup>54</sup> See Gordon Tovey, *Children's Painting*, Wellington, Art and Crafts Branch, Department of Education, 1972; Ray Thorburn and Peter Smith, eds. *Art in Schools: the New Zealand Experience*, Department of Education, 1978.

<sup>55</sup> Efland, 1990, p. 198.

themselves to a particular mode of expression. Peter Smith states, “[w]e were led to believe, and in turn led teachers to believe, that ‘small’ was out, as were pencils or pens. Boldness was a criterion of excellence, and excessive attempts at ‘realism’ were rather to be discouraged.”<sup>56</sup> The combination of these factors contributed to the development of a discernable style. Holland found:

...Some of the art specialists were so enthused and knowledgeable about the processes of art and children’s thinking that they tended to get the children to achieve the ends that they wanted...It looked good and there was a certain stylistic trend that grew up that you could recognise visiting from one area to another area. It is interesting because it was really a case of the enthusiasm, most of it pretty unconscious, but they had devised ways and means of getting the kids to make additions and elaborations so that the work ended up being very very nice to look at, but when it came to the test of kids being on their own, they did not have the substantive background of being able to question their own work and make evaluations.<sup>57</sup>

Holland found that although the ideology and enthusiasm were there, many general teachers “lacked any sense that art had a structure, that there were things you could actually talk about and actually see”.<sup>58</sup> He came to feel that there was a lack of a substantive base to the philosophy for teachers who needed a both a deeper understanding of the thinking that lay behind the ideas as well as some means by which to evaluate what was happening in their classrooms. Many teachers were going through the motions and exercises, he observed, but didn’t really comprehend how to move from the idea into practice. Macaskill noted this phenomenon also: “One of the things we found is because there was no teaching of technique ...you got the ten-year-olds paintings looking the same as seven-year-olds, they were creating ‘child art’ and there was no growth and development happening.”<sup>59</sup>

Macaskill also recalls her surprise at discovering that it was possible to tell which children’s pictures matched with which art specialist amongst her group of colleagues.

All of us taught in the same way, none of us interfered with the children and we all took a similar lesson. We’d meet every Friday and discuss what was a good idea to do with the next lot of schools and the next lot

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<sup>56</sup> Peter Smith, Per. Com., August 26, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Merv Holland, Interview, February 15, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Merv Holland, Interview, August 30, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Jeanne Macaskill, Interview, December 10, 2005.

of kids and so on. We'd all do topics like 'skiing on the mountains,' or we'd all do 'swimming in the sea' or whatever it was, we'd all do it. And when we came to tidy up at the end of the term and put this work [away] ...you could pull out all these pictures of 'skiing on the mountain' and immediately tell those are John's, those are Ian's, those are Jeanne's, those are Jean's! It was *so* interesting; the personality of the teachers came through in the kids' work even though there was no interference. It was I suppose the emphasis we put on things. It was very rare that we'd lift one up and say, 'Now whose would that be?' It was quite interesting.<sup>60</sup>

On a philosophical level, Popper's critique of the self-expressive credo echoes that of Dewey who makes a useful distinction in *Art as Experience* between the different kinds of experience. Some experiences he believed, are "inchoate", that is, "things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into *an* experience."<sup>61</sup> In contrast, an experience proper "flows from something to something. As one part leads to another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself."<sup>62</sup> He held that the "unity" of an experience is its "esthetic quality", and that this is "neither emotional, practical or intellectual" by definition. One of these properties may be "dominant" within an experience, but it does not define it. In the same way, he argues, self-expression can also be inchoate:

There is no expression without excitement, without turmoil. Yet an inner agitation that is discharged at once in a laugh or cry passes away with its utterance. To discharge is to get rid of, to dismiss; to express is to stay by, to carry forward in development, to work out to completion. A gush of tears may bring relief, a spasm of destruction may give outlet to inward rage. But where there is no administration of objective conditions, no shaping of materials in the interest of embodying the excitement, there is no expression. What is sometimes called an act of self-expression might better be termed one of self-exposure; it discloses character – or lack of character – to others. In itself, it is only a spewing forth.<sup>63</sup>

For an experience to be educative, Dewey believed, it must move forward in development in "continuous movement" and unity. His critique of the Froebelian concept of unfolding lay in this lack of dynamism. In unfolding he argued:

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<sup>60</sup> Jeanne Macaskill, Interview, December 10, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Dewey, 1934, p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-62.

Development is conceived not as continuous growing, but as the unfolding of latent powers toward a definite goal. The goal is conceived of as completion, – perfection. Life at any stage short of attainment of this goal is merely an unfolding toward it...Since growth is just a movement toward a completed being, the final ideal is immobile.<sup>64</sup>

In Dewey's view factors which worked against aesthetic experience, were:

... The humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure. Rigid abstinence, coerced submission, tightness on one side and dissipation, incoherence an aimless indulgence on the other, are deviations in opposite directions from the unity of an experience.<sup>65</sup>

Viewed in this context, one of the tensions in Tovey's philosophy lay in its expressionistic interpretation of children's art, which became restrictive in its almost exclusive focus on the imaginative and the subjective. Ultimately the vision also became wedded to Tovey's charismatic personality and personal enthusiasms, factors that provided both remarkable opportunities and inevitable limitations to the development of art and craft in schools between 1946 and 1966. The strength of Tovey's philosophy lay in the fact that it was anchored in a concern for the individual child, and was based on the recognition that child art was worthy of respect as an art form in its own right. His vision encompassed Maori art and craft; the 'sharing of cultures' was sanctioned by Maori leaders and provided a unique opportunity for staff to grow both individually and collectively as artists and teachers.<sup>66</sup> Many of the staff whom Tovey protected, challenged and encouraged as developing artists and teachers are among the most highly esteemed artists in New Zealand today.

From an educational planning and policy perspective, Beeby's strategy to modernise teaching methods through the 'fringe' subjects of art, craft and physical education was highly successful. The specialist teachers who worked with missionary zeal saw that these activities were integrated into other subject areas in ways that recognised and accommodated children's individual differences. The development of community education programs and the frequent exhibitions of children's art over these years had a profound effect on the public appreciation of art and craft as well as introduced the idea that these activities had a rightful place in the curriculum.

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<sup>64</sup> Dewey, 1921, p. 39.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>66</sup> Pound, 1994, p. 156.

It also needs to be remembered that if for a time Tovey became something of a ‘messiah’ for the arts and crafts movement, these were extraordinary times. They were, in Beeby’s words, times of “real faith”, times when people “believed the world could be altered by education”.<sup>67</sup> They were also times in which people believed that art education in particular, would “contribute its share to the great task of the resurrection of a humanized world”.<sup>68</sup>

The previous chapters have examined the theoretical, pedagogical and policy developments that provided a fertile ground for educational experimentation particularly in the realm of art and craft education in the first half of the twentieth century. In Part Three, the focus moves to Elwyn Richardson and his work at Oruaiti School. Here through an examination of Richardson’s biography, philosophy and pedagogy we see the ways in which he rejected, modified and transcended the educational thinking and practice of his times as well as reflections of the historical developments in art and craft education that preceded him.

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<sup>67</sup> Beeby, quoted in Middleton and May, *Teachers Talk Teaching, 1915-1995: Early Childhood, Schools and Teachers’ Colleges*, p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> Henry Schaefer-Simmern, *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity: Its Basis, Processes, and Implications* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948), p. 201.

## **Part Three**

### **An Educational Biography**



## **Chapter 8: An Experimental School: The Story Behind Elwyn Richardson and Oruaiti School.**

I enjoyed deeply the aesthetics of natural things, I would look and look, feeling all over the mollusc examining detail with my lens, then I would go back and do it all again. I just loved what I contemplated.

– Elwyn Richardson

### ***Bush, Beach and Sky: Richardson's Early Education***

To understand Richardson's orientation to education and to art education in particular, it is as important to look to his early life and personal development as to the educational policies of his time. This chapter examines critical events and episodes from Richardson's early life and schooling which were to become formative influences on his pedagogy and educational philosophy at Oruaiti School. It then outlines the relationship of Oruaiti to the educational administration of the time and to the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education.

Elwyn Stuart Richardson is unsure of whether he was born in his Onetangi farmhouse on Waiheke Island, or on the small ferry en route to the shores of Howick, or at the Otahuhu hospital, which was their destination on July 8, 1925. His mother said he was born on Waiheke where he spent his early childhood, although his birth is registered at Otahuhu. Aside from an older brother, Erroll, who regarded him as something of a pest, his early life was solitary, with the nearest neighbour six-and-a-half kilometres away. His eldest brother Edward, whom he idolised, was already in the navy by the time Richardson could remember him and was a rare visitor to the farm. At twenty-six kilometres long and nineteen kilometres across with gently sloping hills, the island provided a remote and panoramic playground for Richardson. He roamed with his cat, fished for eels in the beach inlets and played with his imaginary friend at the periphery of farm activities. When Richardson met Ray, the first boy he had ever encountered, who also lived on Waiheke Island, his solitary expeditions became less frequent and he regularly walked the six kilometres to his new friend's house to play. It was not until he was five and went to the

small school in Ostend Bay on the island that he met his first girl, whom he thought of as a curious variation of a boy, a ‘boy-girl.’

Richardson described his family as ‘poor fringe farmers’ who were largely self-sufficient. They had no electric power and grew much of their own food, even wheat, which they had milled in Auckland. Luxuries were rare and confined to Christmas and birthdays and mainly consisted of clothing or a pair of shoes. Dairying provided the main source of the family’s income and was supplemented by shearing work. In winter, when the cows were dry, his father, Henry Richardson, would leave for three to five months to work cutting railway sleepers in the totara, rimu and kahikatea forests of Lake Taupo. Richardson recalls that his father was a splendid axeman and a skilled shearer and frequently travelled south to work on high country sheep stations. When he was away, the milking, which was done by hand, was left to Richardson’s mother, his brother and himself, and delivered around the island. One of his earliest memories is of falling over constantly in his gumboots around the milking sheds. He recalls often falling asleep as a pre-schooler with his head resting against the warmth of his cow as he milked in the early mornings. By the age of five he was helping with the summer milk deliveries, travelling by a cart pulled by their donkey, Neddy, to Onetangi beach each morning. He measured the milk and collected the money as he went from door to door. The cream was carted daily a half-mile from the house to the road where it was trucked and shipped to Auckland city for processing.

His mother, Ruby North Sharley, came from Nottinghamshire – an English county in the East Midlands. She met Richardson’s father at a dance for New Zealand soldiers who were waiting for a ship back to New Zealand after the Great War had ended. Because Ruby was only eighteen, she had to seek her parents’ permission to marry before sailing to New Zealand in 1919. Richardson recalls being referred to on occasion with his brother as ‘war-bride kids,’ a title he felt was not quite as good as ‘pig islander kids’.<sup>1</sup> His mother had begun a degree in English literature and had a love of books. She found rural life

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<sup>1</sup> A pig islander: an early colloquialism for a new settler in New Zealand, particularly in the North Island. The term originated because of the abundance of wild pigs in the bush, which provided the primary source of meat for early colonists. Richardson recalls that his father frequently used the term and that some elderly people he knew when he was young referred to themselves in this way. Although this seems odd, McGeorge suggests that it may reflect New Zealanders’ commendable tendency to self-deprecation and might have been used by default after the term “Maorilander” had been properly consigned to obscurity, and before “kiwi” came into widespread use to describe a New Zealander (Colin McGeorge, *Per. Com.*, February 2009).

lonely and when she wasn't working on the farm she immersed herself in reading, writing letters, and listening to music on the gramophone.

His father left school in standard six, aged twelve. Richardson describes him as literate and able to write fairly well. He was a remote figure who had experienced a hard life as a child and treated his boys similarly. He was, Richardson believes, guided by the Christian ethic 'beat your children to make them good' and did not display affection.<sup>2</sup> It was not until Richardson was about eight years old and he went to boarding school that he began to like his father, and not until his teenage years, when they moved to Epsom in Auckland, that he felt that he began to know him.<sup>3</sup> There he found that his father became a warm and interested person who was kindly. His early life, however, was spent in the orbit of his mother. He remembers her as a warm, kind, thoughtful, forgiving person who provided a "haven" and a "refuge from life's struggles".<sup>4</sup>

### **An Early Mentor**

The arrival of Walford Outram Moffat Camille Fowler as a 'remittance man' on the farm when he was three years old was a welcome addition and was to have a profound influence on Richardson's ideas about teaching and learning. The disgraced son of an Earl, Wal was expelled to the colonies by his family for a minor misdemeanour, rumoured to be of romantic origin, and paid a remittance by his father to settle away from England.<sup>5</sup> Apparently a graduate of Oxford University with a Masters degree in zoology, Wal was initially of limited use on the farm often confusing human supplies with cow feed. However, his engaging personality, love of books and vast scientific knowledge was appreciated by the family who often assembled around the table in the evenings to view his exquisite pencil drawings of insects, trees, flowers and fruits and his insect box with specimens pinned in place. Richardson remembers being enchanted with Wal's drawings of the New Zealand weta and being taught by him how to let the large insect safely climb over his hands and arms.<sup>6</sup> Wal brought "an upper middle class dimension" to the

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<sup>2</sup> ESR Per. Com., August 21, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> The birth of Walford Camille Fowler was registered in Brentford, Middlesex, in the first quarter of 1907. His birth certificate shows that his parents, Frederick Camille Fowler, 47, and Ellen Elizabeth Nicholls, 27, were married on 16 November, 1903, at St Barnabas Anglican Church in Kensington. The fathers of both bride and groom were deceased. The certificate has a column for "rank or profession of father" and both fathers are recorded as "gentleman".

<sup>6</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 16, 2007.

Richardson home, he recalls. “I’m sure mum sounded him out on how the upper class lived in England, because we slowly began to use serviettes and there were linen cloths and better bedware. Wal showed us his mistakes at the table so we knew what not to do!”<sup>7</sup>

Wal formed a close friendship with Richardson who was intrigued by his insect collections and stories and followed him around in his work on the farm. Wal in turn, enjoyed Richardson’s insatiable curiosity and companionship and took over his early education, which was augmented by boxes of books his brother sent over twice a year from England. Every evening, around the kerosene lamp, Wal read aloud from adventure stories that included Kipling’s *Jungle Book*, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, and Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, which Richardson still remembers vividly. He recalls his father, who was never read to as a child, quietly putting aside his novel, clearly enjoying the luxury of being read to but embarrassed to admit it. By four years of age, Richardson was able to read fluently his older brother’s standard one ‘Blackie readers’<sup>8</sup> and had made his own pin-board insect collection.<sup>9</sup> He remembers learning to write on fences, in the cowshed and the shearing shed, where he learned to swear listening to the shearers, and on any other surface that offered a space for words. His first formal writing, which he remembers as hard, took the form of letters to Wal’s brother thanking him for books and requesting additional titles that Wal recommended.

Wal was a provocative teacher, who modelled a sensitive style of examining the world about him. When appropriate, he brought a kind of questioning vagueness to the problems that Richardson encountered as he struggled to build dams and wheels – which he called ‘fluttermills’, that spun over the dam spillways in the streams and drains of the dairy farm. Wal was happy to introduce an instrument, such as two pieces of wood with a length of wire between for cutting clay out of banks, but always let Richardson figure out how to use it to best advantage. Wal’s was an approach that Richardson absorbed and identified in later years of his life as *scientific method*. It encompassed “construction, experimentation, frustrations overcome, sudden or quiet happenings observed, questions raised in the mind,

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<sup>7</sup> ESR Per. Com., July 29, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Blackie and Son published Blackie’s New Systematic Readers, which were authorised for use in New Zealand Schools in 1923.

<sup>9</sup> ESR Per. Com., July 29, 2007.

discoveries followed by new and further ones and so on to a conclusion.”<sup>10</sup> In his mind he called this strategy ‘the unworded question’.

Wal was wonderful at this – the, “What will we do? What are you going to do, Elwyn? What are you going to do?” I remember when we were discussing the blades on the fluttermill: “What are you going to use?” and I said, “Grass.” And he said, “Oh – You try it.” He didn’t say, “It won’t work.” And immediately I could read him, you see, even though I was a little boy, and I said to myself, he knows that it won’t work, but he’s too nice a man to tell me. I mean I must have had an element of abstraction, in me, an ability to see in concept that some of the stuff was abstract...<sup>11</sup>

Richardson was led by Wal to keep building and succeeding, a process sustained more by Wal’s questions about the failures and the limited successes of the fluttermill than by directions:

Wal was a helper. He assisted me to surmount problems, but only in extremis. For example, the wall collapses in the dams. He told me about reinforcing, but in terms of what was available such as dry flax flower stems. He left everything else to me.<sup>12</sup>

After his first successful dam was swept away in a flash flood, Wal asked Richardson if he would build a new one. Richardson replied that he didn’t know, but he’d think about it. In the end he told him that if he did, it would be only ‘for fun’. “I meant that I’d discovered all there was to find. Wal nodded. He did a lot of nodding...saying nothing.”<sup>13</sup>

Years later at Oruaiti School, Richardson’s memories of his fluttermill experiments became his metaphor for personal integrative discovery learning. He found that many of his Oruaiti students made conclusions that were worth considering further: “There was always somebody operating in an abstract way, in an intellectual way and they were very young. But then they’d go back to being a little boy or a little girl again and the world was ok.”<sup>14</sup> Richardson did not consciously follow Wal, but looked at every situation in as open a way as he could:

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<sup>10</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 27, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> ESR Interview, October 9, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 29, 2005 (Emphasis Richardson’s).

<sup>13</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 29, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> ESR Interview, October 9, 2005.

I never gave the game away, but I asked questions like Wal, which led to actions and conclusions. Where is the current fastest at the bend of the creek? Why? How? What does it do? Is it still fastest anywhere when it straightens out? And beauty was always there. What's good about this? What do you like best? Why? Can you use any of these observations? Why is it cold at the creek? (A deep idea – the moving water may create air movement). How can we test and tell?<sup>15</sup>

I became a malacologist because of the aesthetics of perfection of molluscs, and a scientist because I saw difference in shape, form, texture, which separated species and subspecies.<sup>16</sup> I had been taught the joys and delights of nature; I was an active geologist and malacology fanatic! I enjoyed deeply the aesthetics of natural things. I would look and look, feeling all over the mollusc examining detail with my lens, then I would go back and do it again. I just loved what I contemplated...I was of course doing what I had learned at Wal's teachings; yet I don't remember acknowledging that at all! It had become a part of me. I knew how to 'love' my botanical specimens, marine animals and whatever the day gave us by way of weather. ... I was committed intellectually and spiritually to environmental science and art...<sup>17</sup>

Somehow, also, Richardson felt that the companionship of Wal made up for the distant nature of his father.<sup>18</sup>

Wal gave me what I needed to inherit: a love of science, of literature and poetry. There was something quite universal about Wal.... Indeed, Wal was my real father figure!<sup>19</sup> ... He taught me to look, feel, see change, respect, love, be astonished, respectful of nature.... He took me out to learn to look, as I did at Oruaiti with the tamariki.<sup>20</sup>

## Memories of Schooling

When the time came for Richardson to attend Ostend, the small school on Waiheke Island in 1930, his advanced abilities earned him the ire of the local schoolteacher who scolded him for being 'smart' and forbade him to read the senior students' books. He decided then that he hated school.<sup>21</sup> His milk deliveries brought him to the attention of a city lawyer who lived on Waiheke Island and who was on the Board of Governors of the Dilworth Ulster Institute. The Institute administered Dilworth, a private boarding school in

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<sup>15</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 23, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> ESR Per. Com., October 31, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> ESR Per. Com., August 21, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> ESR Per. Com., February 23, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> ESR Per. Com., July 27, 2007.

Auckland for boys from disadvantaged backgrounds, which had been established in 1894 by an Irish-born Auckland farmer and businessman, James Dilworth. The lawyer, who enjoyed his milk-delivery conversations with Richardson and recognised him as a bright child, invited Richardson's parents to apply for a scholarship.<sup>22</sup> In 1933 they made the seventeen-kilometre trip from the island via ferry to Auckland for a pre-admission interview and medical examination, staying the night in the Salvation Army Hotel. Richardson recalls feeling overwhelmed by the indelicate proddings of the doctor and the impact of the noise, huge buildings and mass of people on his first visit to the city. He was accepted and began in standard one on October 7, 1933 not long after his eighth birthday.

Richardson found institutional life bewildering and frightening. He was, he said, both terribly home-sick and 'Wal-sick.' He was prone to sleepwalking and often woke up with grass clippings between his toes and scattered through his sheets, which made him unpopular with the matrons.<sup>23</sup> His anxiety made him prone to bedwetting, an offence for which he was caned repeatedly, once so severely he spent two weeks in the school infirmary. He was told that the school was devoted to 'character building' that "we were charged 'to fight the good fight with all our might', but we never knew what with."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Dilworth was his first "deeply felt situation of real horror, pain and almost total despair."<sup>25</sup>

Some ran away and on their return the headmaster gave them twelve of his best with his thick cane. I recall looking at one boy's bum after that. It was cut to bits, black and blue, red with blood! I never, thus, had the guts to run away, but I thought of it and planned what I would do. (I wouldn't go home, but would head south and try and find a kindly farmer to give me work. I would be "Jack" – I had "lost my memory" and so on). When I left Dilworth at 14, I left the horror behind but I was affected by it. I wanted no part of such behaviour ever.<sup>26</sup>

In Richardson's second year of primary school while he was still at Ostend School on Waiheke, Wal left for Australia to work on Royston Station, Goondiwindi, Queensland. A few months after Richardson began at Dilworth School, Wal caught a particularly fine

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<sup>22</sup> Eligibility for scholarship was not based on academic merit, but on the basis that the prospective student "was an orphan, the son of a widow or the son of parents in straightened circumstances or of disabled parents" (Wilton, Murray, *The First One Hundred Years of Dilworth School, 1906-2006: The Dilworth Legacy*, The Dilworth Trust Board, 2007, Volume 1, p. 423).

<sup>23</sup> ESR Per. Com., October 16, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> *Six Plus One*, unpublished short story, Elwyn Richardson, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 3, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 3, 2006.

death adder. As he took the snake out of his bag to show his colleagues, he was bitten on the finger. Richardson states that Wal cut his finger off with his bowie knife and made his way to hospital where he spent a week and seemed to recover after a few days, but then suddenly relapsed and died in his sleep.<sup>27</sup> Richardson who had only been at Dilworth a matter of months recalls:

I was at Dilworth when I heard the news: a special personal letter from my mother (she knew of my love for Wal of course, and knew that I would suffer). I had some kind of emotional collapse, refused to eat and cried for several days in the sick bay. Then I became still, and just sat there. The headmaster came to see me – I was already terrified of him having sustained a terrible whacking for wetting my bed. He told me ‘to be a man’ and said that I was to go back to class. A friend took me over and gradually I came to terms as much as an eight-year-old can, with the loss of Wal! Thus, I lost the most significant friend/mentor I ever knew!<sup>28</sup>

On his first visit to Waiheke, after Wal died, Richardson remembers coming home and feeling the urge to climb Rangihau hill to collect insects “so I could replace Wal I suppose”.<sup>29</sup> His mother referred to this exploratory hike as ‘going for a Wal’.

I found only spiders and trapped one and I began a new herbarium and later a shell collection. All of these ‘Wal things’ were to appear in our walks at Oruaiti School. (I would smile, but did not quite say, when we set out to see what the river plants were about: “Let’s go on a Wal to the river.”<sup>30</sup>... He in his way set up my personal scientific ‘attitude’ and methodology as I applied it to my kids. I became their ‘Wal.’ I often wonder what would have become of me if I did not have Wal, teaching, advising, saying nothing (often vital!), reading to me, studying forestry with me. He was so special – he never said or did too much – he felt when to say something and when not to...Who else ever had such an influential friend?<sup>31</sup>

Richardson remained at Dilworth until he was 14, leaving on December 13, 1940. In his last two years he became more accepting of the school and found brief moments of joy in

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<sup>27</sup> ESR Per. Com., Apr 4, 2007; Wal’s death was noted in The Argus newspaper, Melbourne, Victoria, Monday February 4, 1935, p. 10. (<http://newspapers.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/11012280?searchTerm=%22snake+bite%22++fowler>). In this account, which does not mention the self-surgery, Wal apparently collapsed and died at the hospital. He was 28 years of age. He is buried in the Goondiwindi cemetery in New South Wales, Australia. Cemetery records state: Fowler, Walford, died 2 February, 1935. Son of Frederick Camille Fowler, died of snake bite.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> ESR Per. Com., 16 July, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> ESR Per. Com., February 23, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> ESR Per. Com., August 30, 2005.



poetry and science.<sup>32</sup> A science teacher who corralled Richardson for lying in long grass on the fringes of a cricket game collecting ergot was impressed with his detailed knowledge of the fungus. He complimented Richardson on his science and remained friendly towards Richardson, making him head laboratory boy in his final fourth form year. When others were lined up for a thrashing he was generally “set aside for other punishment”.<sup>33</sup> He developed a love of chemistry, which he was to pick up again later at the University of Auckland. The effects of his traumatic experiences, however, galvanised his desire to do things differently. He also found within himself, in his endurance, a deep sense of faith:

Dilworth gave me so much from their terrible treatment of us all, the terror, the pain, the miseries of bullying by the staff! Their efforts worked in the opposite way! That was my belief when I went teaching. I was a sworn respecter of kids after that. Any form of violence as we experienced it was abhorrent! I would be a different kind of person, given to respect, concern, joy, even I suppose a form of love for kids. At Oruaiti I set out to establish control through the pleasures of learning, doing and making. That as you know, was my life’s purpose. I felt blessed to do those things.<sup>34</sup>

Oruaiti was a gift to me, I always felt that after Dilworth and the atrocious treatment I received (I was said to be a ‘good boy’ yet I was caned 21 times in 7 years and received about 60 cuts across my bum and thighs. Each cut came up red turning to purple and sometimes bleeding). Well after that I had the feeling that God was looking after me, probably one of the greatest presumptions of my life? I certainly was inspired to be decent and good to children... I was full of real respect and care.<sup>35</sup>

Although Richardson’s mis-educative experiences were a powerful formative influence, he felt that his close environmental upbringing and the influence of Wal, remained his true wellspring.<sup>36</sup>

As a young child, I was looking into natural environments – I’d follow up ideas. For instance, I found wonderful oval smooth greywacke stones in a part of a creek bed. I collected some small ones, then set about searching other shorelines for more. I found a few in another place a little distance away. I wondered a great deal. I took my stones to Dad, then Wal and got their opinion on them. In time, I found the same stone in boulders and knew that from boulders pieces could be made by

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<sup>32</sup> ESR Per. Com., October 19, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> ESR Per. Com., December 22, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 2, 2006; Feb 23, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> ESR Per. Com., October 18, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 4, 2006.

streams into pebbles. Mine were large! I concluded: it was a fast stream. I told Wal and he agreed. I found out a form of deduction. I wanted my tamariki to be able to deduce in the same ways. I saw the place of knowledge and learning in a very pertinent way.

Oruaiti was an environmental learning ‘institute’. We’d discover/find/observe, then I’d ask questions and I’d ask the tamariki to ask questions. Commitment to natural environmental things led to an emotional involvement. I think a lot lies at Wal’s feet. He gave me a passion for nature. Wal gave me my grounding.<sup>37</sup>

## Post-Primary School

After Richardson left Dilworth, his family moved to Epsom, a suburb of Auckland, where he attended Mt. Albert Grammar School. Following this, he undertook a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Auckland, studying geology, chemistry and botany to third-year level. In his final year, the cumulative strain of trying to support himself financially while studying and the separation of his parents, which affected him deeply, left him unable to sit his final exams. His application for aegrotat consideration was refused and his incomplete BSc meant that he was unable to advance in his part time job as an industrial chemist in the amalgamated brick, pipe and pottery division of Crown Lynn Potteries. Greatly disappointed, he applied for a molluscan position at the Christchurch Museum but withdrew at the last minute to apply instead to Auckland Teachers’ College in 1946.

At this time, the College offered a two-year training programme, which was followed by one year as a probationary assistant. Up until the 1960s this programme was formal and academic in nature and was deemed to be “largely inadequate in preparing teachers for the complex tasks involved in teaching” by a Royal Commission on Teacher Training in 1963.<sup>38</sup> Although at teachers’ college Richardson found a certain freedom in Dewey’s philosophies, which he described as a “‘she’s all right’ permission to enter into expressive areas of feeling,” he regarded it largely as a “waste of time”.<sup>39</sup> His only inspiration came from art lecturer Hilary Clark who along with Charlton Edgar (one of the La Trobe art teachers recruited in the 1920s) brought a new direction to the art education programme at the College in the 1940s. Together Clark and Edgar introduced a system of credit courses

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<sup>37</sup> ESR Per. Com., October 18, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Bill Trussell, ed. *Auckland Teachers College: Reflections on a Hundred Years of Teacher Education* (Auckland: Centennial Committee of Auckland Teacher’s College, 1981), p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> ESR Per. Com., February 23, 2007.

that allowed students to spend more time on a chosen field of art.<sup>40</sup> They also broadened the scope of painting and brought in new subjects such as photography, puppetry, stage design, and pottery.<sup>41</sup> It was through their work that Richardson was introduced to the delights of painting, etching, printmaking and pottery.<sup>42</sup> He left the College, he said, “somewhat hating education” but inspired by Clark, and his friend Len Castle, to teach pottery and to build a kiln.<sup>43</sup>

After completing his division A (Primary) course in February 1948, Richardson spent his probationary teaching year at Puni School near Pukekohe. He applied for the remote country posting at Oruaiti School in 1949 because of its distinct fauna of sea life, specifically molluscs. In particular, he was intrigued by the species *Agnewia tritoniformis* a rare, delicate pink gastropod mollusc with frilly flanges from the muricid family.<sup>44</sup>

### **Oruaiti School and the Department of Education**

Although there were 23 children on the roll when Richardson first began at Oruaiti School in 1949, only twelve arrived on his first day. The children at Oruaiti were predominantly a mixture of Brethren and Catholics from both Maori and European families. New Zealand Brethren<sup>45</sup> are a highly cohesive social group with intermarriage, business relationships and friendships being formed almost exclusively within the confines of their own non-denominational fellowship.<sup>46</sup> The Brethren at Oruaiti were unique in that marriages between three early European settlers and local Maori women in the 1830s led to an Exclusive Brethren assembly that was bicultural and very strongly established in the

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<sup>40</sup> Trussell, 1981, pp. 36-37.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> ESR Per. Com., February 23, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Richardson discovered new habitats for this mollusc in the Northland region and wrote a paper, *Distribution in New Zealand of the Australian gastropod Agnewia tritoniformis (de Blainville)* for The New Zealand Journal of Scientific Technology (1953). Over the next years he published several scientific papers for the Taupaki Malacological Society about East Cape Fossils from Te Piki, and new species he discovered in Hawkes Bay.

<sup>45</sup> The first Brethren in New Zealand came from England in the 1850s and settled in the Motueka district of the South Island. In Britain divisions within the movement led to two distinct branches of brethren, ‘open’ and ‘exclusive.’ In New Zealand these divisions were of less consequence initially and the various assemblies around the country developed along more open lines until the 1870s when an exclusive movement arose in Auckland. Originally the movement was characterised by a xenophobic attitude towards Maori, however Brethren attitudes changed after the Second World War because of the vital role Maori had played in New Zealand’s military response. Consequently there was an upsurge in Brethren outreach missionary work and Maori numbers rose significantly in the 1930s. Peter Lineham, J, *There We Found Them: A History of the Assemblies of Brethren in New Zealand* (Palmerston North: G.P.H. Society Ltd., 1977), pp. 51, 145-146.

<sup>46</sup> Lineham, 1977, p. 11.

community as early as 1900.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, many Brethren children at Oruaiti were able to (proudly) claim some Maori lineage, with the extended Foster family and Windust families linking back genealogically to the Te Ururoa, Chief of the Ngapuhi Iwi or tribe.

In his first days at Oruaiti Richardson discovered that the early Brethren in the Valley had donated the land for the school, which was built in 1898, for the children of their own small community. They held conservative ideas about education and expected a formal and structured curriculum concerned with the ‘three R’s’. They did not view films or read newspapers and were wary of outside influence, particularly on their children. Accordingly, it was common for Brethren parents to shun high school education, which was viewed by many as a corrupting influence.

The Maori children at Oruaiti were Catholic, and most had attended the Convent-Catholic School at Waitaruke prior to Oruaiti School. They came from the surrounding areas of Taemaro Bay, Hihi, Waimahana Bay and Akatere. All of the children belonged to one iwi,<sup>48</sup> Ngati Kahu ki Whangaroa and their hapu,<sup>49</sup> which included Ngati Aukiwa, Ngati Kuri, Ngati Mokokohi, Ngati Rehia, Matakairiri and many more.

It took several days before word reached the Maori students from Hihi that the school had a new teacher. The school had been run by a series of relievers in the years before Richardson’s arrival and as he recalls, “bereft, forgotten, smelly, dirty, even vulgarly neglected”.<sup>50</sup> The water tank was full of dead starlings, the grounds were overgrown and there were no teaching materials, save for a large leather strap in the teacher’s desk drawer. Still plagued with ghosts from his life at boarding school and dismayed by the conditions that met him, Richardson felt moved to conduct a small beginning ceremony. Inviting the children to watch, he took the strap in a pair of pliers and proceeded to the school incinerator, which was full of burning rubbish. They gathered around:

They whispered. One or two laughed – the laugh of a child who does not yet fully understand. I held the strap up above smoking paper and a dull fire and dropped it. I laughed and they did too, although some were

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<sup>47</sup> One of the early settlers, James Berghan, married a daughter of chief Ururoa. Thomas Flavell and Steven Wrathall, who were on the same schooner named ‘Darling,’ also married local “Maori girls of high lineage”. Frear, *The River, the Valley and the People: A Story of Oruaiti Spanning 140 Years*. p. 8

<sup>48</sup> Iwi: Maori – for tribe.

<sup>49</sup> Hapu: Maori – for clan or descent groups.

<sup>50</sup> ESR Per. Com., February 02, 2009.

confused – they still did not understand. Someone brought me my wicker-backed chair and we sat with our lunches under a small group of native trees, which I soon heard had been planted by parents of my pupils some twenty-five years ago. I remember that a good many giggled and hid their faces, finding me, and no doubt my actions, all too incomprehensible. So I told them about myself and what I hoped Oruaiti would be. They were very quiet and ate their sandwiches and sucked on bottles of coloured drink. Someone rang the bell, one ring of a few seconds. No one got up to play. Joy a tall standard six lass, seemed to take charge. She shuffled the ‘little ones’ as she called them, away and picked up where they had sat. There were no balls to play with – the school was devoid of any normal school material. (I had bought chalk from the store in Mangonui)...The following day I would tell the tamariki what other new things we would do and what Oruaiti would become under their management and mine. I brought them into the structure. My ambition was to make the school and the environment about us, theirs.<sup>51</sup>

After the first day Richardson wrote to the Education Board with a long list of requirements and declared a holiday period for want of sanitary materials and water, a move for which he was docked two days pay.<sup>52</sup> Three days later a staff member from the Auckland Education Board arrived with a carload of materials and Richardson was able to make a beginning.

The students who arrived on the first day were predominantly girls, who wore long dresses and their hair pinned up in buns. Richardson learned that few teachers had lasted for many years at the school, with the men often disappearing out of discouragement and the women being wooed away from their jobs by local Brethren farmers. His great disappointment at the derelict environment and the wary parents reignited his feelings of ambivalence about his choice of teaching as a profession over malacology. The unexpected death of his mother at this time filled him with grief and compounded his disillusionment about the state of affairs at Oruaiti. Overcome, he left the school and returned to Auckland where his doctor diagnosed a breakdown and recommended a period of sick leave, which was granted, and a relieving teacher was appointed to cover this period. Richardson stayed in Auckland for three weeks, immersing himself in pottery, kiln building and firing with his potter friend from teachers’ college, Len Castle.<sup>53</sup> After this time, feeling fortified, he

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<sup>51</sup> ESR Per. Com., March, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Elwyn Richardson, *Stories Told by Tewaiwaka* (Henderson, Auckland: Richardson, E, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> Peter Smith, Per. Com., September 18, 2005.

travelled back up to Oruaiti from Auckland on his BSA motorbike to start again. He began as if he had not met the children before and found that they loved the act.

Richardson's aims and purposes at Oruaiti were broad. His early learning experiences, based on a pragmatic yearning to experiment, make and play, were the bedrock upon which he built his educational approach. At Oruaiti he hoped that:

... my Tamariki would learn to know and 'read' their feelings about their lives, parents, relatives and even me, as well as all the environment about them. I wanted them to find delights, 'surprises,' warmth, struggles, even fear in some, but mostly I wanted us all to grow together as culturally fit people. I had to be a model of respect, and I hope I was.<sup>54</sup>

By 'culturally fit,' Richardson meant intellectually conscious of the meaning and values of what they perceived and "sensitive to poetic meanings and metaphor".<sup>55</sup> Like his early experiences building dams, he viewed the creative work as a medium for learning rather than an end in itself. Richardson's belief in the individual potential and natural creative abilities of each child informed the pedagogical expression of his view in which he became more of a 'co-learner' than 'teacher' in the conventional sense. Richardson's developmental curriculum and educational philosophy are discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters.

Like most remote country schools Oruaiti was classified as a 'sole charge school'. As the teacher in charge, Richardson began modifying the curriculum and working environmentally as soon as he returned. He stated that he "had no permission and didn't see it as necessary. I was covering a syllabus as I saw it".<sup>56</sup> He had some difficulties with school inspectors in his first three years until his school came to the attention of Gordon Tovey, through Bob McEwan, an area organiser for the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education in Auckland. McEwan had visited Oruaiti School and was impressed with the students' experiments in pottery and firing and he and Richardson struck up a friendship. McEwan organised materials, practical advice and a small grant of

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<sup>54</sup> ESR Per. Com., June 15, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> ESR Per. Com., July 2, 2007.

<sup>56</sup> ESR Per. Com., 15 June, 2007.

six pounds for Richardson to buy pottery materials.<sup>57</sup> In 1954, McEwan encouraged Tovey to come and visit the school.

Excited by the quality of work at Oruaiti School, Tovey shared with Richardson “his dream of establishing a group of schools somewhere, where other subjects would develop and grow in much the same way as pottery was developing at Oruaiti”.<sup>58</sup> Tovey invited Richardson to join his scheme, which was to become known as the ‘Northern Maori Project’, an experiment that began with a group of five Northland schools and which emphasised the use of “rhythmic patterns, integrated activities and community involvement”.<sup>59</sup> However, despite being impressed with Tovey’s ambitions and his engaging manner with his students, Richardson expressed reluctance, fearing that if he participated he would become enmeshed in the system he had purposefully tried to isolate himself from.<sup>60</sup> Richardson recognised that if he were to join the scheme, his work at Oruaiti would add the weight of an inspirational exemplar to Tovey’s proposal. However, Richardson was already well into the development of his own curriculum and although the invitation to participate offered the advantage of a supportive professional community and the possibility of greater access to materials, he found his ideas differed significantly from Tovey and he was ambivalent about becoming involved.

These differences will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. However, they were most strikingly manifest in their contrasting orientations towards the development of children’s artistic abilities and distinct pedagogical approaches. Richardson’s strong scientific background and his interest in the close observation of the natural world was at odds with Tovey’s emphasis on the affective and the subconscious in children’s expressive work. Whereas Tovey was highly influenced by Cizek’s ideas and recommended the use of large sheets of paper, big brushes, bold colours and teacher-led motivations,<sup>61</sup> Richardson issued his students with pens, ink, fine pencils, and through the use of a microscope, encouraged detailed naturalistic observation of flora and fauna. As will be discussed further, Richardson and Tovey also differed significantly in their views on Maori education.

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<sup>57</sup> Thorburn, 1978, p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 123.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>61</sup> Tovey referred to stories read by the teacher at the beginning of a lesson as a ‘motivation.’ An example taken from Tovey’s book *Children’s Painting*, (1972, pp. 12-13), is included in (Appendix D).

Because Maori Schools were at this time controlled through the Department of Education rather than education boards, it was a relatively straightforward process for Tovey to initiate the scheme.<sup>62</sup> The Northern Maori Project won Beeby's support and ran for five years from 1954 to 1959. Oruaiti School was "not officially included" in the project,<sup>63</sup> although its exemplary status as a creative environmental school, geographical proximity and shared Art and Craft Branch resourcing meant that it remained allied to it.

Tovey recognised that as a board school, Oruaiti lay outside the jurisdiction of his project, which was administered through the Education Department and that this left Richardson vulnerable to censure by conservative school inspectors.<sup>64</sup> Richardson learned that on his return to Wellington, Tovey had met with Beeby and suggested that he needed some kind of protection, stating, "[i]f we don't do something about him, the inspectors will crucify him."<sup>65</sup> To this end, Beeby arranged a visit to Oruaiti to observe Richardson first hand. When Beeby arrived, Richardson discovered that he had been well informed and "knew all about me and what I was about. He asked how I was getting on with my inspector...who was a bit of a 'dog' really. So I told him. He promised to clear the air for me."<sup>66</sup> Richardson recalls that Beeby mixed with the students for the day and asked him to teach everyone together – (a thing he rarely did). Beeby also took a lesson with the students himself about the River Meander in Western Turkey, inspired perhaps, by the Oruaiti River. At the end of the day, Richardson found:

Beeby was delighted – on the spot he gave me permission to experiment into creativity and curriculum development. I became the first experimental school! He put it all in a formal letter a week later and called again a year later.<sup>67</sup> Tovey told me that Beeby was utterly excited that at last someone had broken out of the bounds of the set curriculum. His letter gave me permission while I remained at Oruaiti to experiment with 'permissive education'.... I treasured the letter...<sup>68</sup>

Richardson was allocated a yearly grant of £28 and it was agreed that the inspectors who reviewed Richardson's work would report directly to Beeby. In addition to a yearly

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<sup>62</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>66</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 30, 2006.

<sup>67</sup> ESR Per. Com., November, 9, 2006.

<sup>68</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 30, 2006.



report, Richardson was to write a 'serious document' at the end of the experiment.<sup>69</sup> Although he was still subject to regular inspection he was not assessed on the basis of the 1929 'red book' syllabus:

Beeby had freed me from following the 1929 syllabus with the warning that if we mucked up I would have to clean up the mess, or some such words. It wasn't my syllabus at all. Mine was forming in my head and in the tamariki's minds. So the Little Red Book remained on the shelf as new curricula were written.<sup>70</sup> There was no doubt that I was apart from it all, and the qualities of language arts, maths, behaviour et al. was what I was assessed on. I was graded on our 'products.'<sup>71</sup> I don't think that the Director's permission to experiment was shared with ordinary inspectors. The senior one certainly knew.<sup>72</sup>

### *The School Inspectors*

Richardson was inspected in 1949, 1953, 1956 and 1959 by different inspectors each time.<sup>73</sup> The Inspectors' reports were favourable, with the first inspector commenting on a "distinct change for the better" after Richardson's employment. His report stated, "[t]he children are keenly interested and are encouraged to use their initiative and are well-mannered. Order, tone and discipline are very good."<sup>74</sup> Perhaps with an awareness of the challenges Richardson faced in winning the support of the Brethren families, he added, "With this situation parents are urged to give their practical assistance to the school because then, and only then, can full effectiveness be accomplished."<sup>75</sup> By 1953, Richardson's individual approach was well established and the inspector, Mr A Richards, noted:

This school is in the hands of a thoughtful and energetic teacher who has wisely attempted to follow a curriculum based on the needs of the community: Although standards of work are variable, in general, good all round work is being done. The pupils support themselves in a manner reflecting credit on the school and the homes from which they are drawn...further developments will be watched with interest.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Richardson, *Integration in Language Arts Expression*.

<sup>70</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 1, 2007; Note: Richardson frequently referred to the official syllabus as 'The little red book.' The 1929 syllabus was revised and a new curriculum was published in 1948 just as he began teaching. Although this did not include art and craft, it covered most other subject areas.

<sup>71</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 7, 2007.

<sup>72</sup> ESR Per. Com., July 30, 2008.

<sup>73</sup> In 1949 Richardson was inspected by inspector Mr. E. W. Bell in 1953 by Mr. A. Richards, in 1956 by Mr A. F Burnett and A. Scherer and 1959 by Mr J. Box.

<sup>74</sup> Education Department Inspection Report, Oruaiti School, Nov 11, 1949, (Archive reference: BCDQ A737/1)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Education Department Inspection Report, Oruaiti School, 12 March, 1953, (BCDQ A737/1)

On the next inspection, three years later in 1956, Inspectors Burnett and Schearer wrote:

The district is very fortunate in being served by a head teacher who is so interested in the full and natural development of children, one who is so able in his own implementation of the methods designed to bring about this development...Under his direction the children are engaging in activities which are developing independence and initiative. Much creative work is being fostered through art and craft, drama and nature study. The importance of mastery in the basic skills is fully realised and these receive regular attention. Physical education too is well catered for. School tone is very pleasing indeed. The pupils are free and natural in their behaviour and are busy and happy while living and working together...We commend the parents for the real support they have given to the school and the commissioner for the keen interest he takes in its welfare.<sup>77</sup>

Interestingly, in a letter from Tovey to Merv Holland in November 1955, there is a record of a visit by Burnett, which was negative. However, nothing critical appears to have been filed at this time. Tovey wrote to Holland apropos this visit:

Richardson has had a visit from Burnett and company and has had a complete slating. I met him yesterday and from what he told me they are out on a fairly thorough bitching campaign to fix the work once and for all...All this is very serious...I will have to see Arnold [Campbell]<sup>78</sup> –on my return but I do not like the smell.<sup>79</sup>

Although Beeby gave the Oruaiti experiment his official sanction, clearly interactions with conservative inspectors remained a source of tension at least up until 1955. Although Tovey's Northern Maori Project had a finite five-year timeframe (from 1954-1959), there was no timeframe put on the Oruaiti School experiment.<sup>80</sup> Over the years of the experiment Richardson regularly sent prints of students' work to Beeby. By 1956 the roll had risen to 37, enough to add a second classroom and employ an assistant.<sup>81</sup> By 1958, with new enrolments, the roll had grown to just over fifty students.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Inspection, May 3, 1956.

<sup>78</sup> Arnold Campbell was appointed Chief Inspector of Primary Schools in 1952. He became assistant Director of Education in 1959 and succeeded Beeby as director in 1960.

<sup>79</sup> Correspondence: Gordon Tovey to Merv Holland, 26 November, Ms Papers – 7096-01, Alexander Turnbull Library. Note: Presumably this was the same Burnett who was joint author of the favourable 1956 report. Tovey's letter suggests that someone (possibly Arnold Campbell) set Burnett straight about Richardson's status.

<sup>80</sup> Tovey, 1976, p. 35.

<sup>81</sup> Cherry Raymond, whom Richardson recalls as "magnificent", accepted a long term relieving position and took over the junior classes. When she left to undertake further training at Wellington Teachers' College, Eunice Foster, who was an aunt to a number of the students, took over the younger children. She was 'untrained' with a natural affinity for teaching and Richardson found her to be an excellent teacher.

<sup>82</sup> Correspondence, ESR to G. Tovey, March 14, 1958, MS Papers-7096-02, Alexander Turnbull Library

### *The Art and Craft Branch at Oruaiti*

Under the auspices of the Art and Craft Branch, a number of art specialists visited Richardson at Oruaiti School offering practical advice, expertise and an ongoing supply of high quality art and craft materials. Many were highly qualified and accomplished artists in their own right. Richardson found that these artists were “very sensitive visitors” who did not offer to teach skills unless asked and were “careful not to interfere”.<sup>83</sup> For example, Ralph Hotere, now a renowned New Zealand painter, was a frequent visitor: “Ralph admired and yarned for hours with my Kelvin, Sonny, Walter and David about their art, but treated them as artists in their own right.”<sup>84</sup> Potter Barry Brickell, who was not employed by the Department, but who was a friend of Richardson, helped with firings and “talked to the students as potter to potter but refused to teach the children pottery, believing they were potters already”.<sup>85</sup>

After studying with Shurrock in Christchurch, Jim Allen graduated from the Royal College of Art, and returned to New Zealand.<sup>86</sup> From 1953 to 1956 he was the Field Officer for the Northern Maori Project and following this he became Liaison Organiser for the Auckland office of the Art and Craft Branch. Oruaiti was not part of his brief, but Tovey suggested that Richardson was someone whom he “might want to look in on occasionally”.<sup>87</sup> Allen, who was most interested in what he saw, ended up spending around six months working in a close relationship with Richardson.

Allen’s considerable background in sculpture meant that he was able to introduce techniques and concepts that extended the existing practice. For example, one of Allen’s teachers in England, John Skeaping, had spent a year on sabbatical in Mexico where he had seen the local people making large pots using the seeds of raupo or bulrush plants. Mixed in with the clay, the tiny fibres of the raupo gave it great tensile strength. The introduction of this technique and the large oil-fired downdraft kiln Allen built allowed the children at Oruaiti to move from making small finger pots to much larger pots, ‘big fatsos’ as they called them. Allen dug suitable clay from local water tables and prepared it for

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<sup>83</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 30, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Jim Allen’s training with Francis Shurrock is discussed in chapter four.

<sup>87</sup> Jim Allen, Interview, October 7, 2005.

school use. He also showed them how to use the richly coloured clays of the region to decorate their pottery. The energy derived from these technical discoveries led to further levels of thinking and exploration amongst the students at Oruaiti. When pushed by the children, Allen brought a piece of his own work, a bronze head of his son, Tony, to school. Richardson recalls, “[t]hey did not say much but their feelings and then its impact on their work was astounding. It led ultimately to a series of large salt glazed heads of some magnificence.”<sup>88</sup>



**Figure 4: Tony – bronze head by Jim Allen**

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<sup>88</sup> Richardson, 2006.



**Figure 5: Clay heads by Oruaiti School students**



**Figure 6: Clay heads by Oruaiti students**

On another occasion Allen cut several large manuka trunks which, when inverted with their branches trimmed, eerily resembled human figures. One morning, the best of these painted white, with very small eyes on the head, was standing in the school garden to greet the children when they arrived at school. The children were delighted and shouted out “Kehua! Kehua!” – the ghost! They christened him “White Spirit” and spent much of that day making their own stick men. Richardson recalls feeling delighted at the development of art appreciation, aesthetics and humour involved, and believed that each of these aspects was important. The following morning when Richardson arrived with the last busload of children, he saw that there was a giant eight- or nine-foot stick figure in the

central area of the garden. A small pink ribbon tied around her neck identified her as the work of the girls at the school. Everyone laughed at the sight:

We talked and talked and smiled. Some clapped hands. Someone spoke to him/her in Maori. And there was much more laughter when a muted reply was heard. Others ran around the garden where they were shouting and laughing. It was the festival of spirits...The new 'Spirit' group asked to work on him with chisels and rasps. They gouged two elongated eyes and a pert little mouth. The eyes were painted turquoise...the mouth was red...there was a very small, red belly button...Someone asked what we should call him. Suggestions flowed freely and were as quickly discarded. Then the artistic humour of the spirits idea was revisited...and so it was settled. He became 'Methylated Spirit.'<sup>89</sup>

Richardson found Allen a "significant and hugely sensitive 'staff member' from whom he received "immense encouragement and belief".<sup>90</sup> Yet, he says, "Jim would not do anything to our art process other than delightful little "nibbles" by way of such sensitive ideas. He saw art as a lot of fun! He taught me the fun/joy side of it!"<sup>91</sup> Allen, in turn, found his work at Oruaiti to be "very different" from his other teaching situations further North.<sup>92</sup>

...For me it was a great learning experience, first of all having this magnificent teacher there, and then the relationship between the teacher and the children. I suppose consciously or subconsciously I've followed that kind of relationship within my teaching from there on, because it was something that worked. The other thing that became very obvious was that if you separate out the subjects of the curriculum they remain entities of their own. If you can use elements of one entity to enlarge the perspective on another entity, you've got a kind of different growth pattern emerging out of it so that they begin to reinforce each other. And that became very obvious in Oruaiti...it was a progressive development...it took them from writing about things into poetry, and talking about different poets and...writing their own poetry and then he'd get them to read it aloud and then he'd be saying things, "Did you like that?" and "What did you like most about it?" and so on.

They were just straight questions the kids answered, they built upon their own responses...English and arithmetic were all dealt with, but they were dealt with in a way which reinforced each other...Elwyn became something very special. Although I contributed something, I also got an awful lot back from it both from his methods of teaching and

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 30, 2006.

<sup>91</sup> ESR Per. Com., January, 2006.

<sup>92</sup> Jim Allen, Interview, October 7, 2005.



our close observation of the children and how they responded – it was streets ahead of any of the others. So Oruaiti was very important to me.<sup>93</sup>



**Figure 7: Jim Allen working with Oruaiti students**



**Figure 8: Oruaiti School pottery**

Occasionally Richardson had a specific request for technical help and advisors would visit for several days to teach new skills, bringing materials and equipment with them. Dick Seelye who worked in the Art and Craft head office and had a Diploma of Fine Art, led a workshop on screen printing and Vic Gray, who also worked in head office, and was an accomplished artist and Oxford graduate, taught fabric printing.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

Word of Richardson's work at Oruaiti spread with each visit from art specialists and students. The considerable interest led to a steady stream of visitors to the school, which became something of a distraction for Richardson and the children. In 1958, Richardson asked Tovey for assistance in limiting the number of visitors, stating:

I think you will have to be very strict about who comes into this school this year. I realise there are some who will have to come just because of the desire that they want to see, but there are so many who really would enjoy the experience but who would in reality muck up the year...I intend to refer any or all to you who ask...I do not find it a strain for people of the specialist type to come in here; they usually make a contribution which makes a difference because they are creative people...I do not think we are *that* marvellous and feel humble about the nice things that do happen now and then here. I leave this matter to your better judgement Gordon.<sup>94</sup>

Allen observed that Richardson soon became "a reference point within the Art and Craft Branch because all of the Art and Craft Branch staff had been to Oruaiti and knew what was going on there". "As a result", he said, "many of the ideas from Oruaiti were beginning to be spread amongst the primary school Art and Craft people to the teachers."<sup>95</sup> Although Tovey was keen to see Richardson's work succeed, the combination of this phenomenon, along with Richardson's rising reputation within the Art and Craft Branch as an innovator, and the fact that his successful experimental work at Oruaiti work pre-dated Tovey's Northern Maori Project, seemed to contribute to a degree of rivalry between the two men. It was exacerbated by very strong personalities and contrasting educational approaches, and seems to have intensified over time, particularly after the Northern Maori Project ended and the Oruaiti experiment continued.

Holland recalls that Richardson was always regarded by the people in the Northern Maori Project as being "something of an interloper," a perception he suspects was promoted by Tovey. Tovey was "very circumspect", Holland recalls, "about who he would talk to about his discontent with Elwyn but it was spread nevertheless".<sup>96</sup> He believes: "... It may have arisen when he was trying to organise the Northern Maori Project and inevitably

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<sup>94</sup> ESR to G. Tovey, January 5, 1958, (MS Papers – 7096-02, Alexander Turnbull Library).

<sup>95</sup> Jim Allen, Interview, October 7, 2005.

<sup>96</sup> Merv Holland, Interview, February 15, 2007.



somebody would have mentioned, ‘Oh we’ve got a bloke up here that is already doing something like that,’ you know, and that was a bit of a red rag for Gordon.”<sup>97</sup>

When Holland visited the Northern Maori Project he always managed to work in a visit to Richardson, a detour, which he says he learned not to mention to Tovey. Holland says he was drawn to Richardson because:

I just found him so invigorating...because Elwyn thought about what he was doing as being experimental – but worthy of experiment – just the same way as good ideas are developed. You think, ‘Oh that might work let’s try it.’ I used to drop him a note sometimes just along the lines of, ‘It’s going well for you, just you keep going because it’s pretty hard to innovate and then find that there are forces that are bigger than you that are not being very helpful.’...One of Gordon’s phrases was – he’d always say it with a smile on his face, “the bastards are getting too big for themselves”, and that was something. And I would say to him, “Be a generous granddad – just listen, there are some good ideas out there. They’re not trying to undermine you!” But mana was in it and when Gordon perceived that his mana was slipping or that other people were having ideas...he’d bottle it up and then suddenly there’d be an outburst...”<sup>98</sup>

Peter Smith, an artist and educator, came to know Richardson first through his role as an art advisor and then as a liaison organiser for the Art and Craft Branch. Smith was seconded by Tovey to Auckland Teachers’ College in 1953 to set up the first New Zealand post-graduate secondary school art teacher training programme. Over the course of the Oruaiti experiment Smith brought many groups of student teachers to visit the school. Smith identified with Richardson’s views on art teaching and shared some of his misgivings about the child art credo as espoused by Tovey. He was impressed, in particular, with the fine pen and ink drawings Richardson’s students made of their botanical specimens, which stood in stark contrast to the style of painting that was encouraged at this time. Richardson saw that Smith recognised the children’s deep emotional involvement in the arts derived from science and he found Smith’s ability to discuss the intuitive elements of his approach in abstract terms both instructive and enlightening.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

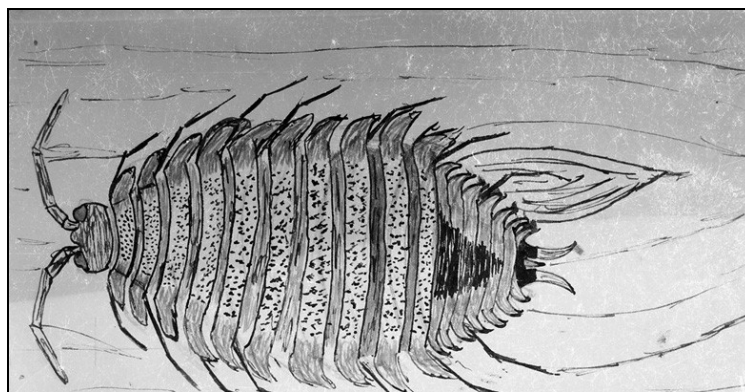


Figure 9: Pen and ink drawing by Oruaiti student

As principal of Auckland Teachers' College, Smith saw parallels between Richardson's integrative approach and his own interest in the interactive contributions of the various art disciplines. He believed that a substantial knowledge of a discipline was an essential prerequisite in order to teach that discipline to students.<sup>99</sup> With his strong scientific background, Richardson was proof to Smith that only when a teacher has a substantial grasp of a subject can s/he shape its delivery to beginners without doing it and the learner a disservice.<sup>100</sup> Smith recalls accompanying Richardson and his class on a wander across a stream and up a hillside:

[Richardson] plucked some leaves from a willow near the stream and held them in his hand. Then he plucked some more, further up and asking no one in particular, wondered why the leaves at a higher level were longer and more vigorous than at the streamside. Of course there followed a 'scientific enquiry'. Curious, the students set about collecting, measuring and tabulating leaf length, and then pondered possible explanations for variations. It involved applied arithmetic and mathematics, suppositions or hypotheses, possible conclusion etc...<sup>101</sup>

[It was the] distinctive mark of his educational philosophy. One did not tell the students how or why. Rather when they asked questions or when he, apparently casually, wondered about some thing or event, he would very skilfully suggest a line of enquiry – what we have called the 'inquiry method', I suppose.<sup>102</sup>

In a similar way Richardson led the parents along, Smith observed, and as time went on they gave him more and more support. The early forays into pottery, for example, were a result of a conscious effort by Richardson to appeal to the Brethren's requirement for a

<sup>99</sup> Peter Smith, Per. Com., September 18, 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

‘useful’ education. Smith recalls that Richardson was easily able to “persuade the Brethren that pottery – the making of utilitarian vessels – was to domestic advantage. (Later, he used the same arguments to advance explorations of flora and fauna and geophysical features, since they could enhance understanding of agricultural skills.)”<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the students’ fabric printing was used for classroom curtains and clothing.



**Figure 10: Oruaiti students with fabric prints**

Viewed in the context of the art and craft movement in schools at this time, in choosing to focus on ‘craft’ activities at the outset, Richardson was instinctively following the pattern employed by the early art specialists such as Doreen Blumhardt and Sam Williams who used craft as the catalyst for broader reform in art education. In the Brethren community, as with more conservative principals, craft seemed to offer the route of least resistance. Once craft was established, the distinctions between fine art and applied art in the minds of detractors often seemed to become somewhat immaterial. It is noteworthy, too, that in the broader context of educational reform that Beeby envisaged, the development of art and craft activities at Oruaiti demonstrated vividly the desired effect of breaking down barriers between the school and the community.

Under Beeby’s direction and Tovey’s zealous management, the generous allocation of resources allowed a close working relationship to develop between the art specialists and individual teachers over extended periods of time. This meant that as well as providing material resources and extending existing practice, a hospitable space was created for an

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

exchange of ideas that went both ways. Art specialists introduced specialised techniques, equipment and provocative ideas but also learnt a great deal from working experimentally in such close relation with teachers and students. For Richardson as with other teachers, the abundant high quality art materials and professional support opened new dimensions of art practice and often led to collegial relationships and enduring friendships with art specialists that continued well beyond the official frame of engagement.

## Chapter 9: Richardson's Study of the Natural World

I was basically a scientist who went teaching  
– Elwyn Richardson

Richardson's work at Oruaiti School has been almost exclusively interpreted as a unique experiment in art and craft education. While this perception is due in part to the fact that his successful work provided an important rationale and showcase for the ongoing reforms in art and craft education in the 1950s and 1960s for the Department of Education, it is also partially a result of the strong visual impact of his book, *In The Early World* (1964), which was the most lavishly illustrated book the New Zealand Council for Educational Research had ever published at this time. The remarkable art and craft work featured throughout the book is regarded as evidence of the innovative departmental policies that allowed teachers wide latitude for experimentation and ample high quality art materials and professional support. The history and nature of these reforms have been discussed in detail in the preceding chapters. However, although these critical factors created a fertile context for Richardson's work, I suggest in this chapter, that the interpretation of his work as an experiment in art and craft education is misleading as it obscures the scientific conceptual basis of Richardson's approach. Instead, I argue that the art and craft work at Oruaiti arose directly out of a scientific foundation that was shaped more by Richardson's interest in environmental study than by the dominant ideas about child art promoted so effectively by Tovey during this period.

Although fostering individuality and creativity through the arts was a common goal of most progressive educators committed to art and craft education at this time in New Zealand, Richardson chose a unique entry point, and proceeded in a distinctly different pedagogical fashion from his contemporaries. He encouraged close scientific observation and detailed recording of the natural world and instinctively shied away from the damp-paper and large-brush credo of child art. In this chapter, I examine the way Richardson's scientific methodology provided an intensely hospitable framework for learning through

the arts and offered opportunities for extension that a programme based on an expressionist approach to child art could not have afforded.

For Richardson, there was an intimate relationship between science and art. He rejected abstract divisions between individual subjects and developed an integrated thematic approach through a programme of in-depth environmental study. As a teacher, his attention to the aesthetic qualities of the natural environment led to an expansion and richness of meaning for the students that spanned all subject areas. Out of a study of wasps, for example, came poetry, pottery, linocuts, creative writing, and mathematics. Using the arts as a medium for learning, all of the different properties of a phenomenon under study were open to investigation in a detailed and dynamic way. There were few formal lessons at Oruaiti, but there was connection everywhere.

As he progressed, Richardson became increasingly aware of the limitations of language as a medium for children to express their understandings of the world around them, and of the great opportunity the arts provided for students to find their own symbols. His cognisance of the limitations of an individual medium coupled with his belief in the progressive structure of a learning experience in a Deweyan sense, led him to develop his educational theory of integration, which became the cornerstone of his educational philosophy. This chapter begins with a brief unpublished vignette written by Richardson about an artistic-scientific experience when he was eight years old at Dilworth boarding school. It then examines Richardson's orientation to science, before considering his philosophy of art, and his theory of integration, which emerged out of this.

#### The Upper Changing Rooms at Boarding School

The changing room was set up with open-ended shelf units for the storing of work clothes. There were two such rooms and a locker space for about 80 of us – the work force for Saturday morning fatigues. It was a darkened room into which light came from one small south-side window and the door when it was open. A single electric bulb could illuminate the place – this was needed on dull overcast days. Two quite old puriri trees (*vitex-lucens*) branched over the roof and there was always a scraping noise to be heard on the roof when no one was inside. The galvanised iron roofing was obviously serving a new purpose. It had been used before and nail holes let pinpoints of light into the darkness. The shed was a little apart from other buildings and the quadrangle.

When we played our weird games of 'locking up and letting out' this room was sometimes the jail into which those caught were placed, The

bolt was thrown and it was up to 'your' side to open it and call "all free". We played this game, which was fast and furious, at dusk until the evening bell called us to the bathhouses. I often chose to hide in the room when it was not a jail but suited as a good hiding place where I could be alone and away from the school feeling. I would climb up on the lockers and stretch out on the top up against the wall. I was small and could almost disappear. I would breathe in trying carefully to control my breath so I was not heard. In the evenings, the nail hole specks of light from the sky were insignificant. Still, I would raise my head and try to look at them. There was no particular rule about going to the changing room except the all-evident one of not being engaged in some kind of mischief. The masters knew that we used the room as a jail and subsequently paid us no heed.

I found myself free from responsibilities one Saturday and near my hiding place. I went into the darkened room and was surprised to see the roof, which I came to call the 'sky', studded with stars. Pinpoints of light held my attention. I climbed on top of a bank of shelves and lay with my face to the roof near several 'stars'. I was fascinated that these tiny needles of light must travel from the 'stars' all the way to the floor, perhaps, but certainly to my eyes where I saw them. I could not however see more than two shafts of light that reached the floor. I investigated and found a wider, ragged hole, which obviously let more 'star' light in. I lay there a little while and in the end heard the bell chime and had to run not to be late in line. I meant to return and did days later when I had time to play. However, before I could return Dags [nickname for this teacher] stopped me and asked what I was doing in the changing room. He had seen me perhaps hurrying out alone, running to be in line. I told him what I had found. He listened, I thought, carefully and in an unfamiliar kindly way. He sounded different somehow. He asked me to come see him and tell him what I found out about 'my stars' as he called them.

When I had time, I went back on several occasions and continued to gaze at my stars. Dags had told me that I might see what happened when I changed some part of my star world. He told me that is what scientists do. I thought and continued to look and think, but saw nothing that I could change. One Saturday I returned. It was a breezy day but hot. Leaves blew about my feet. I came to the shed and found the door swinging in the wind. I went in and the door banged closed behind me. It was unusually dark, almost I thought, night time darkness. Had I 'changed' something I wondered? Was Dags right? Is this what I was to do? The room was somehow different. I groped my way to the shelf bank where I usually lay up under the iron by the eave. I had to get my eyes used to the darkness. I closed them and occasionally squinted through my eyelids to test my vision. Gradually I became accustomed to the darkness and a new intensity of 'star light' from above my face.

My first observation was that I saw very tiny shafts of light from some of the stars. I even caught one on my hand – it came, I found, from a larger hole: 'bigger hole, more starlight', I said. I stared with my usual

wonder at my night sky and turned on my side as I would to sleep. I looked down on my shelf and saw strange very small ‘insects’ crawling on the wood. They didn’t move away but seemed to shuffle in one place. When I put my hand on them, I found some on my hands. I shook at them but they stayed on me! I got over my initial fright as I saw that my ‘insects’ came from one of the larger nail holes near my hand. Before I left – it was later than I thought – I saw another group of insects nearby.

I ran to the assembly. Dags was the duty master. He crooked a finger at me and I thought, “here’s trouble.” He kept me in front by him after the prayers and while the others were led into the dining room. “Well,” he asked, “what did you change?” I was very surprised that he remembered my stars. So I told him about the door slamming and the intense brightness and of course the insects. He was interested. He listened and asked some questions and told me to keep trying. I was, he said, to come and talk to him soon when I had changed something else. I was lucky that the door banged shut. It and the new darkness changed the night sky stars.

My next change was that I made a cushion of my work clothes, which lifted my head closer to the ‘big star’ – I named it. I looked through the star hole and was astounded to see the tree branches wavering like insects. It was beautiful and I could not stop myself exclaiming out loud, “It is so beautiful!” For the first time, I went to Dags without his request to report on ‘my experiments’ as he was then calling them. I reported on the change and its effects. He was really pleased about that discovery and my pleasure. He told me that it was, I think, an “artistic appreciation.” But I knew it then as something ‘good’ to look at. I saw that the masters left me alone and did not check on me as they did. I was being trusted somehow.

I returned to the ‘insects.’ I planned next to try and trace them on a piece of drawing paper. I told Dags and he laughed and told me that I was making an ‘interesting change.’ He gave me the materials I needed. When I put the paper down on the flat shelf top, I almost thought that I was covering the insects up. However, there my night sky and puriri tree lay trembling in the wind on my paper. It was magnificent!

I had a long talk with Dags. I wanted to know how I could record the sky picture of my puriri tree. He talked for some time and told me that I had turned the changing room into a giant camera. He said that it would be possible to put a film “in” it but it would be very difficult to get a true picture on the film. It would certainly be a blurry one. He came with me and climbed up on the shelving and saw my puriri tree branches on the white paper. He agreed that it was very beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richardson, E., drafted unpublished short story, October, 2006.





**Figure 11: The upper changing sheds and puriri tree at Dilworth School, 1930**



**Figure 12: Donald Arthur Gray, First Assistant and Science Master, Dilworth School**

Richardson's scientific experience of discovering himself inside a giant camera obscura was quite unlike the natural bush-country scientific knowledge that he had gained with Wal as a preschooler on Waiheke Island. The commonality between his early childhood 'fluttermill' trials in the farm drains and his camera experience, however, was his early commitment to experimentation as the basis for developing his own thinking, and a deep appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of scientific phenomena. Beginning when he was a

preschooler accompanying Wal, Richardson had learned to view the structure of natural things as art.

His experimental approach at Oruaiti School was founded in a pragmatic mode of inquiry where events were not viewed in isolation but in relationship to context. It was a methodology that he followed in the development of his environmental curriculum and that fundamentally shaped his own educational philosophy. His scientific approach was unique in that an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of the phenomena under study was viewed as a pre-requisite for a deep understanding. The scientific was not abstracted from the aesthetic and the aesthetic was viewed as fundamental to the scientific explanation. The pedagogical expression of this belief can be seen at Oruaiti in the development of thematic learning predicated on genuine interest and in the growth of individual assessment based upon shared values. These aspects of Richardson's pedagogy will be discussed in more detail subsequently. Firstly however, to understand Richardson's orientation to science it is useful to relate this to the tradition of 'romantic science'.

### **Romantic Science**

Romantic science is a term coined by Alexander Romanovich Luria (1902-1977) a Russian neuropsychologist and developmental psychologist who is best known for his pioneering work on cognitive function, in particular, problem solving, perception and the pathologies of memory. His two books, *The Mind of a Mnemonist: A Little Book About a Vast Memory* (1968) and *The Man with the Shattered World* (1973) are meticulously researched clinical case studies, which combine classical science with a sensitive and rich portrayal of the lives and personalities of his patients. It was Luria's work that inspired Oliver Sacks, a well-known British neurologist and writer, to develop a similar style of narrative case history writing.

Luria's definition of romantic science is predicated upon German physiologist Max Verworn's theory that scientists can be divided into two clearly defined groups based on their orientation towards science: classical or romantic. Luria explains that classical scholars:

...Look upon events in terms of their constituent parts. Step by step they single out important units and elements until they can formulate abstract, general laws. These laws are then seen as the governing agents of the

phenomena in the field under study. One outcome of this approach is the reduction of living reality with all its richness of detail to abstract schemas. The properties of the living whole are lost...”<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, he suggests, the romantic scholars do not “follow the path of reductionism.”<sup>3</sup>

Romantics in science want neither to split living reality into its elementary components nor to represent the wealth of life’s concrete events in abstract models that lose the properties of the phenomena themselves. It is of the utmost importance to romantics to preserve the wealth of living reality, and they aspire to a science that retains this richness.<sup>4</sup>

Luria’s romantic orientation meant, for example, that instead of his case history, *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, being a treatise on the intricacies of a “grossly hypertrophied memory” it became a thirty-year collaborative work between Luria and his patient, S. V. Sherashevsky.<sup>5</sup> Luria observes that in fact, “a description of Sherashevsky would have been inadequate if it had been limited to his memory. What was required was a careful analysis of how his fantastic memory influenced his thinking, his behaviour, and his entire personality.”<sup>6</sup>

Luria believed that true scientific observation was more than the “pure description of separate facts.” Its central aim, he held, was “to view an event from as many perspectives as possible. The eye of science does not probe ‘a thing’, an event isolated from other things or events. Its real object is to see and understand the way a thing or event relates to other things or events.”<sup>7</sup> To this end, Luria’s central goal was to create a “unified psychology of mind” which would “reconcile art and science, description and explanation”. Luria cites Vladimir Lenin’s observation of a glass, ‘as an object of science’, to illustrate the nature of what he regards as “truly scientific observation.”<sup>8</sup>

A glass can be understood only when it is viewed from many perspectives. With respect to the material of which it is made, it becomes an object of physics; with respect to its value, an object of

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<sup>2</sup> A. R. Luria, *The Making of Mind - a Personal Account of Soviet Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 174-175.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Luria, 1979, p. 178; also A. R. Luria, *The Mind of a Mnemonist: A Little Book About a Vast Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 178.

<sup>6</sup> Luria, 1979, p. 181.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 177-178.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 177-178.

economics; and with respect to its form, an object of aesthetics. The more we single out important relations during our description, the closer we come to the essence of the object, to an understanding of its qualities and the rules of its existence. And the more we preserve the whole wealth of its qualities, the closer we come to the inner laws that determine its existence.<sup>9</sup>

This conception of the aim of science being to “ascertain a network of important relations” lies at the heart of Luria, Sacks and Richardson’s work.<sup>10</sup> Referring to his ten-year study of patients with post-encephalitic disease,<sup>11</sup> Sacks writes that far from obscuring precision, the “fusion of scientific and ‘romantic’ penetrations” results in a more complex understanding:

...Each, I think, is the guarantor of the other. One cannot make a minute study for many years of any group of patients without coming to love the patients one studies...this sense of affection is neither sentimental nor extraneous. In studying these patients one comes to love them; and in loving them, one comes to understand them: the study, the love, the understanding, are all one. Neurologists are often seen as cold-blooded creatures, working out syndromes like crossword puzzles. Neurologists scarcely dare admit to emotion – and yet emotion, warmth of feeling, shines through all genuine work.<sup>12</sup>

### **Richardson’s Romantic Science**

As a scientist who had learned to love his botanical specimens as a child, Richardson found that he had a personal aesthetic desire to understand the beauty of nature and he taught so that his students were able to discover, recognise and witness these values. Like Luria, whom Cole observes, “sought a new synthetic method that would reconcile art and science, description and explanation”, Richardson also sought, and struggled, to find a path that would bring together the scientific and the aesthetic:<sup>13</sup>

I recall a constant philosophical dialogue going on in my mind over months and months, terms and terms. Am I a scientific teacher? Is this creative art yet? When will I know? What will come first? ...I kept this up and it was the ruler with which I measured all art, all poetry, all dialogue about science. Looking back as I did then, as much as now, I was grateful for the values this gave me. It seemed so Wal-like. He did

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>11</sup> Also known as Parkinson’s disease.

<sup>12</sup> Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings* (London: Pan Books, 1973), p. 254, (Sacks dedicated this book to the memory of A. R. Luria and W. H. Auden).

<sup>13</sup> Luria, 1979, p. 6.

this kind of assessment too... I had to maintain this balance between, say science and creativity; poetry and the arts and so on. ...Every move was guided by the heart, had I merely humanised creativity? Turned it into ‘heart feeling’?<sup>14</sup>

Richardson’s difficulty in putting his ‘humanised’, ‘heart-feeling’, scientific orientation into words and his concomitant search for a professional designation that encompassed this, have remained an ongoing challenge for him. It is a struggle that is itself evident in Luria’s imperfect term ‘romantic science’, which Jerome Bruner described in his foreword to *The Mind of a Mnemonist* as an “odd term”, “likely to be misunderstood”.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Bruner noted that Luria’s works which can be categorised as “falling into the ‘romantic category’”, have been not so much misunderstood as ignored in most standard “hard-nosed” commentaries on his work”.<sup>16</sup> However, although Bruner identifies romantic science as Luria’s central philosophical concern, he does not inquire into why these more ‘romantic’ works have been ignored, beyond observing that the two different ways of using mind, the “romantic narrativist” and the “classic scientist”, which Luria combined so elegantly in his case histories, seemed to remain for him the “great crisis of psychology”, “irreconcilable in principle”.<sup>17</sup> This was a dilemma that also troubled Richardson, who rejected such dichotomies, maintaining, “I have not categorised emotion, nor science – ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’ has always appealed to me as the best definition I know.”<sup>18</sup> I float between my science and my art as I observe it.”<sup>19</sup> It was out of an effort to reconcile these different ways of mind that Richardson developed his theory of integration, which began with environmental study.

### ***Streams, Tide and Weather – An Environmental Curriculum***

Richardson brought to his teaching work a commitment to the detailed observation of the natural world and an in-depth disciplinary knowledge of paleontology and geology. When he arrived at Oruaiti his desire was to find his curriculum in the valley and the wider environment beyond the school:

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<sup>14</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 08, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Jerome Bruner, (foreword), Luria, 1987, p. xiii.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. xvii – xviii.

<sup>18</sup> It was William Wordsworth who commented that poetry was “emotion recollected in tranquility”.

<sup>19</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 12, 2006.

It was my closeness to the land, forest, the farm, the sea and nature...all the environmental things, which I wanted to make the basis of my school. I had a strong passion to record our associations and emotional responses to living and loving. I dwelt a lot on just plain looking. – We looked and turned things over in the hands and between our toes – we became passionate environmentalists! Art had to be invented to clarify, to express, one gave rise to the other.<sup>20</sup>

I still remember walking alone in the valley taking cognisance of environmental qualities of plants, relic native trees, pines, thistles, willows, poplars, manuka, the sky, clouds, distant Akatere hills and Miocene volcanic rock faces to the hills. Somehow I felt the need to show my tamariki these things, so that they knew what made up the geomorphology and geology of Oruaiti...we would draw, collect, paint and even make some things in clay about Oruaiti...I began teaching observation of trees, weather, grasses, river, wind, fire, birds, insects, centipedes, bugs et al.<sup>21</sup> I am a lover of nature in its broadest sense. Our programme moved from one idea to another for example, say from rain to storms to rainbows to evening to sunset and so on. We talked each day about what we saw, heard, felt, and thought. It was *so* vital to the programme. This was the initial breakthrough when we started work.<sup>22</sup>

Richardson was, he believed, “basically a scientist. I taught, directed, planned as a scientist, it ruled my life. I saw art strongly as a science. Thus, we drew life studies of small things.”<sup>23</sup> His environmental work was anchored firmly in an experiential basis, and he approached his curriculum in this way, experimenting, observing the results and constantly revising his ideas about curriculum, teaching and learning. He proceeded on the basis of “hunches” and “innate feelings responses about what was right”. These ideas, he said, were “dwelt on, tested, evaluated ... philosophically”.<sup>24</sup> His approach was a kind of radical empiricism, where all knowledge stemmed from personal experience, close observation and experimentation rather than from abstractions. In his first months at Oruaiti he recalls:

I worked out what was needed, what to do to promote an idea, a subject, a curriculum – we were gradually inventing a curriculum – it was a simple expressive one, heavy on personal writing and its disciplines, and arts/crafts the local/near environment and experiences of the tamariki was a strong core to it...My thinking process about the programme occupied me as I drove my [school] bus. I visited ideas; I made mental philosophical leaps and then put some ideas in motion, but never

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<sup>20</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 2, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 30, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 19, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> ESR Per. Com., May 16, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 8, 2008.

unrelated theoretical stuff. It was one thing suggesting a move to another, a kind of mental push for the person. I called it my whydontcher moves...It was the process philosophy which I encouraged.<sup>25</sup> I'd worked out in my mind what I wanted to do and it wasn't some textbook.<sup>26</sup>

Richardson's progress was closely tied to his observation of his own process, both in terms of testing ideas about the substance of his curriculum and his aims and purposes as a teacher.

To construct and develop his curriculum, Richardson combined the scientific processes of close observation and experimentation with imagination and intuition. Richardson saw himself as "a 'door-opener' to the aesthetic world" as he directed his students to observe aesthetic things.<sup>27</sup> He states:

... I was interested in my pupils' play... I saw it as a hunting ground for poetry, story, and especially the imagination...I was testing and experimenting with ideas and actions ... but it was *their* ideas and *their* imaginations, (not some philosopher's). I saw the field of the imaginative as our goal... Oruaiti was a journey into the unknown.<sup>28</sup>

Jim Allen recalls that events such as the spirit stick-figures enriched the children's own play activity at lunch time and that as a teacher Richardson built on these developments:

Elwyn used to watch for their reactions all the time and he'd go home at night and he'd go over his books and be saying, "Oh that was a good thing because so and so said something or other", and then out of that something else grew, you know. We both spent a lot of time watching kids in the playground when they were pretending to be different people and different things, and I think we both decided at the same time it would be great if we could bring all that imaginative play back into the classroom. Well, you can see that this begins to be very different from the normal teaching situation.<sup>29</sup>

## Thematic Learning

Richardson viewed his curriculum as a 'work in progress' in which the interests and needs of the children and the "urgencies" of the environment could influence the daily plan on an

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<sup>25</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 15, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 2, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 19, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 15, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Jim Allen, Interview, 7 October, 2005.

ongoing basis. A storm, a visitor, a new bull in the paddock next door, the discovery of a wasps' nest or other spontaneous event, could all change the day's programme: "The day never came out as planned. A plan sort of damned the day to mediocrity," he found.<sup>30</sup> Generally, Richardson had students fill in a subject plan of possible themes or ideas. Three days might have been planned for, however, if something immediate came up in the students' minds, it took the place of the planned themes. This spontaneity, Richardson said, led to remarkable creative expression.

We moved as the spirit and nature did about us: the gorse study, the cabbage trees, the salty river science and so on. I remember many others: kotuku the heron in our swamp; gum trees; starlings where our chimney trapped them for us in the fireplace. We put numbered rings on their legs, fed them up and let them go. We sent out circulars asking people to ring in or write if they spotted one of them. We found a wide distribution pattern. They were very busy birds!<sup>31</sup>

Many of the subject choices, such as an outbreak of army caterpillar, (a porina moth) simply happened in the farm calendar and were motivated by the seasons, river, swamp, beaches and the farming and social life of the valley.<sup>32</sup> These environmental studies, which involved the local farms and community, felt 'real' as opposed to book history and science, Richardson recalls. In the porina moth study, for example, two farmers assisted the class as they considered the findings relevant to their children who would one day inherit their farms. The students staked out the limits of the caterpillars, drew maps and set up cages to breed the caterpillars. They bred two different species which Richardson had identified by friends who worked in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

In another study, the students discovered in a nearby paddock four or five large gorse bushes (*Ulex europaeus*), an invasive prickly shrub introduced by English settlers, which is the bane of New Zealand farmers. The students considered possible reasons to explain why the gorse bushes had appeared. There were relic answers which the children contemplated such as leftover viable seed. However, there were small plants scattered about the major plant, denser in particular areas. The students considered point after point. Why were there more seeds in one spot; was it because of the prevailing wind? And why

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<sup>30</sup> ESR Per. Com., 7 April, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> ESR Per. Com., May 16, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> ESR Per. Com., May 16, 2006.



small plants? Were there patterns? Small plants near the ‘mother’ bush? Richardson explains the process:

We decided they were ‘young ones, in this instance, but why? Perhaps a good seeding weather season? Possibles, probables, certainties arose. We listed a power of conclusions and in the end came up with our truism: gorse ‘explodes’ its seed – hence the distance from the mature plant. Variance is due to wind differences (probable). Wind (probably/possibly) protects a down-wind side. So you can see the kind of reasoning and observation a local science study can involve. ...I’m sure that my tamariki and I were never quite the same kind of thinkers after that observation reasoning process. There was little art [in this particular study]. The art was in the observations and reasoning processes.<sup>33</sup>

In his effort to construct a curriculum that was related to the children’s lives and environment, Richardson largely disregarded the official syllabus. Although he believed that the ‘problem based’ method suggested in the official science curriculum was sound, he found that the examples given were “improbable choices”. “Schools didn’t want to move into the unknown. It had to be book to mind, teacher to pupil stuff. Boringly failing.”<sup>34</sup> As well, he believed that the science curriculum failed to teach scientific method which represented a “gross inadequacy”.<sup>35</sup> In broad terms however, Richardson was doing what the curriculum suggested, finding science in the environment:

We looked everywhere to find relevancy. The bittern, gulls, hawks, cuckoo, piwakawaka,<sup>36</sup> pukeko, English birds, were our subjects. History of our valley people was a strong study theme. We excavated 19<sup>th</sup> century mud house sites – we looked everywhere. These studies were real, whereas Captain Cook wasn’t....Our Maori themes as I called them, were quite wonderful – we visited ‘ancient’ pa sites and interviewed the few old people. Our in-depth studies were real as against book history and science. We involved our parents and those who knew local history and science.<sup>37</sup>

Environmental science that focussed on real problems required considerable teacher understanding, and because of his scientific background, Richardson was able to bring this to the problems the children studied. He was scrupulous, however, about not adopting the

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<sup>33</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 23, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 11, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 23, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Maori: Fantail

<sup>37</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 11, 2006.

position of ‘the expert’ in front of the children but would volunteer complex scientific information at appropriate times:

I remember explaining after a study of rounded boulders, after I'd gotten all I could about the object from the tamariki et al, I'd say: Do you want me now, to tell you what I know? I would ramble off with an on site explanation/ questioning approach exposing exfoliation of the rock from weathering.<sup>38</sup>

He found that the students appreciated this information and came to regard it as their “personal intellectual property”.<sup>39</sup> As the students searched for new ecologies moving through the river bend, fish, tides, salinity, the poplars and the aspens, he found that they began to think and work in terms of the established practices they had built up.<sup>40</sup> Discoveries were expressed in poetry, prose writings, drawings, collections of objects and paintings. Large lino was nearly always requested for “large thinking ideas”, Richardson recalled. He found that there was a “fuzziness about the boundaries of science, which allowed for considerable drawing records of objects and creatures. I would call it good art stimulation, which was good scientific study. The products were clearly stated and quite unfuzzy!”<sup>41</sup>

Children selected themes from their own lives and interests and often developed a preference for working in a particular medium. Many of the students’ themes revolved around farm life: rabbits, hawks, roosters, bulls, eels, frosty mornings, walking in the dark, night-time sounds. Their intimate acquaintance with the phenomena they chose to study led to a level of expression and interest that is rarely found in teacher-generated topics. Some students favoured pottery, others language, and some, like David Windust, preferred painting. Windust became known in the school as “the mahita of oils” – the expert to whom students went for advice and colour-mixing ideas.<sup>42</sup>

### **Richardson’s Philosophy of Art**

For Richardson, who became a malacologist “because of the aesthetics of perfection of molluscs”, and a scientist because he was fascinated by the “difference in shape, form,

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<sup>38</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 30, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> ESR Per. Com., May 23, 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 30, 2008; Mahita – Maori: teacher/master.

texture that separated species and subspecies”, scientific study was synonymous with art appreciation.<sup>43</sup> His conception of the structure of natural things as art led him to view art as an entrance point into a deeper understanding of the natural world. Because of this, there was an organisational basis to the children’s artwork at Oruaiti that was configured around the scientific processes of “looking, feeling, relationships, colour, wear, line and shape”.<sup>44</sup> This foundation was clearly different from the orientation to child art promoted by many art and craft advisors who largely followed Tovey’s expressionist interpretation of child art as discussed in chapter seven. Unlike Tovey, Richardson did not use ‘motivations’ for painting lessons or to promote group work. There were never, for example, twenty paintings on ‘swimming in the sea’, or ‘Christmas’ displayed on the walls of his classroom. Nor was there a discernable stylistic trend in Oruaiti students’ artwork as there was in the student work of Cizek and his followers, such as Natalie Robinson Cole.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the need to sign their own artwork never occurred to Richardson’s students because it was so personal both in terms of subject matter and style. A David Windust, for instance, was immediately distinguishable from a Jennifer Lloyd, a fact that remains true even for those viewing the body of artwork today.

At times, Richardson felt that his students were “artists expressing science, and at other times scientists expressing art”.<sup>46</sup> Essentially, he says, he viewed his school as “an environmental one with art arising out of all studies”.<sup>47</sup> He regarded art as ‘research’, in much the same way Picasso did when he said: “One must speak of problems in paintings. Paintings are but research and experiment. I never do a painting as a work of art. All of them are researches.”<sup>48</sup> Richardson did not ‘teach’ art as such, and he was opposed to the idea of art purely as an outlet for emotions if it was in the spirit of what he regarded as “undisciplined squads of emotion”, or what Dewey called critically a “spewing forth”.<sup>49</sup> This was in contrast to Tovey’s psychoanalytic orientation to child art in which art was

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<sup>43</sup> ESR, Per. Com., September 23, 2005.

<sup>44</sup> ESR, Per. Com., May 23, 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Robinson Cole was dubbed ‘the American Cizek’ by Lowenfeld. Cole followed many of Cizek’s methods. The work of students is characterised by the consistent use of black outlines, folk-art style human figures that reach from the top to the bottom of the page, large paper size and bold colours. See: Natalie Cole, Robinson, *The Arts in the Classroom* (New York: The John Day Company, 1940).

<sup>46</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 23, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 30, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Pablo Picasso and Dore Ashton, *Picasso on Art: A Selection of Views* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), p. 72

<sup>49</sup> Dewey, 1934, pp. 61-62.

viewed as a vital outlet for emotions and unconscious attitudes of mind. Richardson explains his approach to teaching art in this way:

My approach was my students' approach...Their art was never defined in any way...in fact, it was one of the most natural, unhandled, undirected approaches personal to all...Some influenced others and gathered technical ideas from others...I did not demonstrate ever...I did not present paintings from other schools...my kids had no remembered art culture when they came from other schools...Some art specialists "taught" art. I saw some exhibitions and usually felt rather itchy about it. It felt unpleasantly inaccurate – one saw the heavy hand stamped on it. So whenever the subject of child art comes up I dodge for shelter. I don't believe that there was one at Oruaiti. People drew, painted, wrote unclassified.<sup>50</sup>

Although he was careful not to influence the children's artwork there was an organisation to the process that arose directly out of the students' scientific inquiry of the natural world and from their emotional responses to these experiences. Richardson observes:

There was always a kind of structure to the tamariki's art and writing processes. They made plans, sketches of possibilities and sometimes revisited an idea or a place...Insects and bird life in particular were studied intensely – we had some such study under way almost all the year: observations, feeding, viewing in the river – for example, Jack [the eel]. One student, Trevor Foster, made a study of farm divisions, fences, river, willows, down the valley...It was the tamariki who saw science as a source of poetic themes, especially haiku topics. I fostered the aesthetic perfection element in living things and also in erosion water, light, smoke and almost everything about us. Environmental sources I called them, and, I had a regular theme selected from our valley – it might have been smoke from fires, clouds, rain, a storm, wind, light, shadows and so on. I'm sure that science drove us – we moved from season to season, one weather pattern to another, storms within that – then we'd suddenly study poplars... Art just *arose* from our environmentalism.<sup>51</sup>

Although Richardson recognised that both artistic and scientific processes proceeded from a similar basis of hunches, intuitions and probabilities, he saw science as "a more respectful discipline" than art. He felt that it somehow 'behaved' itself: "It is always disciplined at all ages and stages of its existence. It is literate, open to a 'right' interpretation."<sup>52</sup> In contrast, he felt that "art sometimes has many such meanings. Just ask

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<sup>50</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 2, 2005.

<sup>51</sup> ESR Per. Com., July 30, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 11, 2006.

artists what they say about the same ‘object.’ Art is emotive, speculative, human and although it has its abstractions they have to be understood to be valued.”<sup>53</sup> Despite the fact that he favoured science, he viewed scientific and artistic inquiry as complimentary and epistemologically analogous. Both were ways of knowing based on a process of inquiry and experimentation which were resolved through making abstractions concrete.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, Richardson conceptualised art as a process of inquiry, which was in harmony with the aims and purposes of scientific inquiry. If, for example, he had viewed his students’ art as an anti-intellectual triumph of self-expression, as the child-centred progressive educators had, he could not have arrived at his theory of integration, discussed next, which was predicated upon an attempt to reconcile aesthetic and scientific ways of knowing.

Significantly, it was art, he believed, that “unlocked language” and affected how his students looked at their science. As a research tool, art led to clearer understanding and more astute observation. It was this insight, Luria states, which led Karl Marx, for example, to describe the process of scientific inquiry with the odd sounding expression, ‘ascending to the concrete’.<sup>55</sup> Marx uses the word *wissenschaft* (literally science or knowledge) to describe a scientific approach to knowledge in which the task is to explain the aspects of an experience through concepts that reveal their interrelationships.<sup>56</sup> Marx states that, “the hidden substratum of phenomena must first be discovered by science”.<sup>57</sup> At Oruaiti environmental study revealed the “hidden substratum of phenomena”, such as the geomorphic history of beaches and boulders, while artistic expression provided a means for these revelations to ‘become concrete’ in the minds and feelings of the students. Both were ways of knowing that were anchored in the experiential, the level at which Dewey suggests aesthetic education begins.<sup>58</sup> “In an experience”, Dewey explains: “the flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. The enduring whole is diversified by

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<sup>53</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 11, 2006.

<sup>54</sup> It is interesting to note that Hogben, (whose influence as Inspector General of education for fifteen years is discussed in chapter three), also had a strong scientific background as a mathematician and a seismologist. His primary argument for the introduction of manual training (which encompassed art and craft activities) was that these new subjects would lead to a more organic connection between the various subjects themselves and encourage more practical, ‘concrete’ and varied teaching methods. While the thrust of these reforms was pedagogical, in that teachers would be required to change their methods of instruction, they were underpinned by a desire to reconcile ‘book learning’ with practical activities. The primary aim, like the romantic scientists, was one of unification rather than abstraction.

<sup>55</sup> Luria, 1978, p. 198.

<sup>56</sup> Eric. R Wolf and Sydel Silverman, *Pathways of Power: Building and Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 339.

<sup>57</sup> Marx (1923, p. 478) cited in Wolf, 2001 p. 339.

<sup>58</sup> Dewey, 1934, [1980], p. 36.

successive phases that are emphases of its varied colours.”<sup>59</sup> Dewey’s view resonates with that of romantic scientists Luria and Sacks who recognised the preservation of the enduring whole as the aim of scientific observation. In their view, for example, emotion, empathy and intuition were viewed as critical to a deeper understanding of the neurological pathologies of their patients. Richardson’s theory of artistic activity in children originated from a similar conceptual basis from which he sought to establish a unity between the cognitive and the affective. He looked first to the environment – the river, the aspens, the birds, the chimney smoke in the evenings as the basis for his curriculum in art education, and proceeded from this basis to “look for moves in expression which indicated abstraction”.<sup>60</sup>

In broad terms, Richardson viewed the children’s artistic processes as inherently intellectual and it was this rigorous intellectual basis which led Richardson to surmise:

I think child art, if I had espoused it, would have made my environmental /science art look ridiculous! Our science was based on *real* observation and feelings, whereas child art (I think) was kind of made up stuff. It cut across reality. I never got unstuck with child development in art. When I saw primitive schema, I didn’t boggle – I accepted its products as where the observer was today. He/she would refine this vision in a “real” way. In writing children became realists of the imagination, and in art they followed a similar pathway.<sup>61</sup>

His orientation contrasted with Tovey, who was openly “distrustful of what he saw as analytical thought processes” and who emphasised the affective, relying on the “inspirational and poetic” rather than the scientific, as a basis for his art teaching.<sup>62</sup> Richardson thought of Tovey as “a stages man” – a reference to Lowenfeld and Read’s schema of individual differences in art ability, which shaped the 1945 art syllabus.<sup>63</sup> Although Richardson accepted that these stages in visual conceiving occurred, he believed artistic activity was a process of “a child grasping for ways of saying what he wanted to say, not following some set pathway.”<sup>64</sup> Richardson explains:

I see him [Tovey] as an enthusiastic person. I owe him a start through something of his philosophy of ‘child art,’ but soon saw its limitations,

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>60</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 156.

<sup>61</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 20, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> Henderson, 1998, pp. 156, 153.

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix C for a list of these.

<sup>64</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 3, 2006.

and how it cut across truth. My tamariki were scientists, philosophers, and historians. There was something of the nature of literalists of their imaginations and the cool careful observation of their daily worlds.<sup>65</sup>

I sort of left him [Tovey] when he was using big brushes slopping messes of paint across damper and damper newsprint. Child art, I thought and still think that real children's art is quite distinctly something different! It is formulated upon images, which the child revises and extends, develops and refines over time, it is a process of the development of vision and is resolved in essential details, ever growing as I say.<sup>66</sup>

Richardson's approach to art was at variance with his approach to language where he says that he "heavy handed the culture" where he could.<sup>67</sup> "Every week I read, enthused, quoted, loved, poetry, images, story, I never said though, 'write like this,' but when they wrote imagist poetry I was enthusiastic and acclaimed it."<sup>68</sup> Art, on the other hand, had a different quality about it:

We established our dialogue about art and language – we used some of the 'big words' of language and some fewer of art. It was as if art had a non-verbal factor about it, which we read in feeling forms and muttered inconsequent words of delight about it when it was 'good.' How we used *this* process! The hunch, the intimation! The resolutions!<sup>69</sup>

Richardson recognised that language alone was not enough to resolve problems in art. The non-verbal quality of art meant that students engaged and modified their artworks based upon the basis of what they felt emotionally, so that both the choice of medium and the development of the art product were adjusted depending on what 'felt right'. Accordingly, he saw the pupils' creative work not simply as expression, but as a process of evaluation of personal feelings about a theme or topic. In this regard Richardson's art pedagogy positioned students as active participants in the construction, development and evaluation of their own knowledge and understandings.

### **'Emotion Recollected in Tranquility' – Richardson's Theory of Integration**

It is important to note that becoming 'concrete' in the scientific sense did not mean devoid of emotion. In many instances it was an emotional response that initiated an environmental

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<sup>65</sup> ESR Per. Com., November 20, 2005.

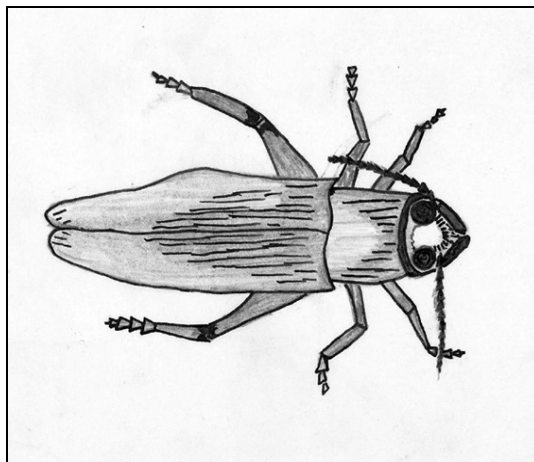
<sup>66</sup> ESR Per. Com., January 23, 2006.

<sup>67</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 19, 2006.

<sup>68</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 19, 2006.

<sup>69</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 19, 2006.

theme of study. In the early stages of his programme, Richardson began as Wal had with him as a child: placing an insect, shell or seed head in front of his students and encouraging them to “get close to it in their feelings”, and to “look at it as a whole and take it in”.<sup>70</sup> He then directed them to move from the contemplation of the whole to the outlines, and then to the internal forms. Once the children had learned how to look in these ways, Richardson found that “emotional involvement” took over and that the students did not need such direction in other subjects.<sup>71</sup> He saw this as “a process of learning to admire and love” that extended far beyond his simple but effective lessons.<sup>72</sup> It was a process he felt was at “the very core” of his philosophy of education.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 13: Weta by Stuart Richardson**

Richardson found that the shift from environmental phenomena to ‘people’ in his students’ subject matter came slowly and was linked to a move towards more personal subjects of expression based on the children’s own interests. Then he found that surprising developments arose:

Print one led to print two, painting one to poem one to story two...The process intrigued me. I called the movement integration. I defined it in my mind and observations as the way a child developed feelings for expression of a personally felt kind. These claimed attention and led more often to an initial expression in arts. It seemed, I thought, that the feelings engendered by an initial expression in say a poem, were such that the writer needed to say something of his intensely felt subject in another way, perhaps story, perhaps in a painting and so on. I called the

<sup>70</sup> Elwyn Richardson, *Into a Further World* (Henderson, Auckland: Richardson, E, 2001), p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



move an integrated process. It is as if the dealings of one level of study including general curriculum, engendered an emotional response and needs, which spurred the pupil to want/need to 'say' those feelings in another way: language to an art form; to a dramatic poem; to a narrative, and even back to another art form.<sup>74</sup>

Richardson believed integration was a personal process, which was motivated by "the way in which the writer or the artist felt strongly and emotionally about the contemplation of some much varied situations, natural objects, or things."<sup>75</sup> It was a process of language/art refinement, which led to a series of developmental expressions. For example, a beach study led to the students assembling a tableau of beach wrack. Richardson recalls that this topic included some science of tides and the wearing away of the shell banks; various genera and species in collections, seaweed samples (agar agar), pieces of worn wood as natural sculptures. The sounds of the sea occupied many, as did the memory of historic happenings such as Maori battles. Many of the children wrote small haiku-like poems, such as:

I stood by the sand ripple marks  
Of yesterday's tidal reach  
And in the quiet between wave slaps  
I thought of warriors' feet in wet sand.<sup>76</sup>

As a learning device brought to bear upon a study, integration "was about the expressive process."<sup>77</sup>

It certainly was part of science *and* of personal expressive art and craft. Its motivation is distinctly a personal one. The students sought to draw, paint and print from natural motifs found and admired in the scientific study in which they were involved. These qualities were invariably aesthetic in origin – they were inspired in a certain emotional level. They would say to each other and to me: 'this is a beautiful texture, form' or whatever quality they found profound.<sup>78</sup>

Integration was not, Richardson points out, what is commonly termed curriculum bundling, subjects combined "for the economy of curriculum coverage."<sup>79</sup> In fact it was often a lengthy process with some students' chosen themes continuing for three weeks at a

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<sup>74</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 16, 2007.

<sup>75</sup> Richardson, *Integration in Language Arts Expression*. p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> ESR Per. Com., May 23, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Richardson, 2004, p. 6.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

time. Richardson discovered that for the average child, there was a “great deal of difficulty in saying everything in language alone” and that the process of integration helped students to develop precision of expression and resolutions of ideas through both language and the arts.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, he advised students not to try and say everything in one media.<sup>81</sup> Instead, he suggested that they select the whole or part that was “vital to their emotional needs”. e found that this process encouraged selectivity.

Some of my people were astounding in the ways in which they sought out their topic from a mass of experience. To be one's best, the person had to find in the mind the highly felt emotional level for resolution whether in language or in the arts.<sup>82</sup>

Richardson's theory of integration arose out of his belief that there was more than one way of knowing. Like the romantic scientists, he rejected any firm lines between aesthetic and scientific judgement, the subjective and objective.<sup>83</sup>

While the interpretation of Richardson's work as an experiment in art and craft education provided a useful validation for the ongoing Departmental of Education reforms in art and craft education in the 1950s and 1960s, it also eclipsed the primary importance of his scientific orientation towards teaching and learning, and the critical question of what it meant to approach art as a scientist. Richardson's work was not simply an exemplar of the new approach to art and craft. The expressive work at Oruaiti arose out of a scientific basis which offered possibilities for student-led extension and development that would not have been available had Richardson followed the dominant expressive orientation to art. His integrated environmental curriculum led to an approach that was developmental in nature, and anchored in the experiential. Each extension in expressive work was based on new self-knowledge gained through experimentation and careful observation. Unlike Tovey, who with Cizek expressly recommended that teachers did not teach linear perspective, expose children to adult art, or copy directly from natural objects, Richardson viewed scientific knowledge as providing a hospitable framework for learning through the arts. His students' detailed drawings of the natural world and integrated studies on environmental topics are evidence of an approach that ran counter to the paradoxical non-

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<sup>80</sup> ESR Per. Com., August 9, 2008.

<sup>81</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 16, 2007.

<sup>82</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 16, 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1978).

interference method promoted by Cizek and Tovey.<sup>84</sup> While Richardson embraced the progressive view of the child as an individual possessing what Dewey termed, “inherent abilities to see, to feel and to express life,” he did not believe that the expressionist orientation to child art offered opportunities for carrying the children forward in their own understanding and growth.<sup>85</sup> Richardson found the prescribed range of materials issued by the Art and Craft Branch for painting and the use of motivations with large groups limiting.

Interestingly, Richardson’s approach to art and craft was closer to the general principles of ‘what constitutes a good craft’ recommended to teachers by Sam Williams and discussed in Chapter Six. His suggestions included the advice that: “A good craft should be capable of development – that is to say, it should allow for progressive increase of skill and taste over a period of years”... it should be “capable of being progressively taught” and “be constructive rather than merely decorative”.

For Richardson, art was not simply about what he termed, “getting feeling off,” but it was about seeking precision in expression, recognising connection and understanding relationship. However, although his pragmatic conception of learning meant that studies always began with a problem such as the longer and more vigorous leaves of the willow on the upper reaches of the river than those at the streamside, such events in themselves were not the primary focus of the inquiry. His aim was not to create future artists, potters, and scientists but to teach the students how to identify problems and find solutions based on what Dewey referred to as the “constituents” of the problem in relation to the “contextual whole”. Like the romantic scientists who believed that the “properties” of a system cannot be “reliably obtained from a study of its parts operating in isolation”<sup>86</sup> Richardson believed the problems they studied should be explored in a non-reductionist, flexible and interactive way. Richardson reflects on his broader aims and purposes as follows:

I hoped that the essence of these talents would still be there as adults even and probably for other things. The most wonderful thing we did – was the evaluation of the weeks work – “we talked, congratulated and communicated values and care, even love or a quality – delight. ... It

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<sup>84</sup> ESR, Per. Com., March 15, 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Dewey, 1934, p. 62.

<sup>86</sup> Luria, 1979, p. 11.

was my constant desire in being a teacher. I was never satisfied if I did not achieve delight, affection for nature, change, pleasure in viewing, sensitivity, poetic feeling and so on.<sup>87</sup>

To illustrate the nature and potential scope of an integrative study, a sample of language and artwork from eleven-year-old David Windust's study of eels in his farm creek follows. His thematic work blends scientific observation with imaginative work in creative writing and painting. His reports in the school magazine, for example, include the identification of several different types of eels, experimentation with various kinds of food, observation of order of feeding and eating habits, a record of new species and attention to feeding in different conditions. His imaginative story *The Three Hills*, expresses his fear of the dark creek on his farm with "the stoned hole that goes down and never ends," and his awe at his huge eel Jack who becomes magic in the story. The 'ugly man' featured in this story was apparently inspired by his neighbour, Máte Urlich, a Dalmatian from Croatia – the first foreigner David knew. Urlich, who is unnamed in the story, was a gundigger who farmed the property next door to David's farm. Richardson remembers that David was fascinated with Máte and his farm machinery. Máte had a lot of time for David, he recalls, and became something of a mentor to him. David's feelings for Máte are evident in the portrait below.<sup>88</sup> The depth and range of David's integrated eel study provides a vivid illustration of the power of integrative learning when it arises from a child's genuine interest in a classroom context such as Richardson's.

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<sup>87</sup> ESR Per. Com., 15 June, 2007.

<sup>88</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 2008, 2006; December 12, 2005.

*An Integrated Study: Samples from David Windust's Study of Jack the Eel and the Three Hills*



Figure 14: David Windust: Máte and Me

### David's Prose Writing on Eels

The following excerpts are from David's contributions to the Oruaiti School Magazine, which was produced, edited and published entirely by the students. The magazine included occasional news reports of events such as visitors to the school, but predominantly featured the students' personal expressive work. Each edition had a different title and often a particular theme, such as rabbits or ghosts. Richardson estimates approximately sixty or seventy were published over a period of seven years.<sup>89</sup>

### My Pet Eels

I thought about eels one day. First of all, I went to find a fishing line; I went to the washhouse and there I saw a fishing line so I took it and renewed the hooks so my eels will get caught easier. I sang out to Dennis and asked if he would come with me and catch one or two eels. So away we went down the hill walking between the sticky paspalum and when we came there I saw one big eel just out of sight. So I smashed a rotten egg and they came from all directions, small ones, middle sized ones and large sized ones. I put my hand on one nose and it went to bite me but I pulled my hand away in time.

<sup>89</sup> See *In the Early World*, pp. 199-201, for illustrations and further discussion of the school magazines

Next day I went down to the river a huge hawk flew up and left the rabbit skin behind so I took the skin and gave it to the eels but they never took much notice. I smashed a rotten egg and they all came at once. I put a finger in the water and a cheeky little eel went to bite it. I put curds in the water but they didn't like that either so I kept on feeding them on rotten eggs and now those eels are still there, fat and healthy. I like to feed eels very much indeed if I have time. Some are too big for the place where I feed them on eggs but the others come right up the bank to get more food.

On Saturday, I went down to the river to finish feeding out eggs. First, one huge eel came up, then four and one small one and by the time I had fed out six eggs there were about twelve eels there ready for their first big feast. I saw that there were three sorts of eels; one was a conger eel, another was a light brown with a white belly and the other was a dark black with a yellow belly. The light brown one is much bigger than the others. I ran out of eggs so I made them a feeding place and went to the pig sty and got some curds.

My biggest eel has a name, I call him Jack, I know him by his colour and size. The smaller eels black or brown are tamer, much tamer but the dark black eels, as soon as I get about a yard from the water's edge, well they reverse away.

Jack always feeds his black mates, he fills his mouth and reverses down deep under the water where his large black frightened eel mates are and he spits half out.

The rubbish dumps seem to bring them around. The place where we dump all of our baked bean tins and other sorts of tins too. Perhaps they would like some baked beans. I don't know; they like meat because I've tried that. (How they get meat) They take a bit and twist around and around and round until with a twist it's off. Sometimes when there's too many eels a big eel comes and bites the next fellow.

### **Eels Again**

I have tried rabbit skin with fur outside. I thought that the fur might frighten them away, so I threw it back to where the hawk had been eating it.

They smell rotten eggs very easily and very quickly. The small eels come at about the middle of eating time when they are about all out but for the start I notice that Jack does all the eating.

### **Eels Again**

Again on the 11<sup>th</sup> I went down to feed my eels; they seem to be twice as big as from the last time I saw them. I still feed them on rotten eggs it's just the food for them, it seems to fatten them very easily. Curd only fills

them up. I only feed them (nearly) once a week I'm trying to feed them again too on curds this week. I found two new small eels there with sharp noses. I'm thinking about a new plan.

### **News About My Eels**

On Wednesday after I had my afternoon tea, I went and asked mum what shall I do? She was working in the washhouse, She said, "feed those rotten eggs to those eels."

I took them and ran down to the river. I put them in the water – three of them. I waited for fifteen minutes and then a small eel came. First of all I thought no eels would come because it was floody in the river.

Waiting, waiting for another eel, another big eel, and sure enough a huge tail came up. And the eel came up to the eggs and there were two eggs left then. I looked again and one huge eel came as straight as a stick and as round as a leg and fat as a bull; I'm sure it was Jack I said to myself and I was right. And then I looked at the rotten stinking eggs and they were all gone and coming up to me was an eel next size down from Jack. He was right out of the water and then he slid back again and another small one came so I hit him bang and he went buzzzzzz along the water leaving a frothy foam behind him

On the 14<sup>th</sup> I went down again seeing how they were getting on I happened to find a few eggs up one of our pine trees and as I was getting them I was frightened they would break because a few days ago I hit one and it went bang and hit my face. I forgot about those rotten eggs and took better ones. When I arrived I smashed two eggs but no eels came.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> (Oruaiti School Bulletin, "Wild Rabbits that Play," approx 1956).





Figure 15: David Windust: Feeding Jack

Richardson describes David's "Feeding Jack" painting as "full of the emotional charge of many days at the pond with his 'friends' the eels. It is the integrative final point of a creative process, inspired, indeed driven by inner feelings and needs".<sup>91</sup>

Following is a sample of creative writing arising out of David's the eel study.

### The Three Hills

The three hills stand still and are shrewd. At the back of the third hill a stream flows strongly and in the stream is a fat black, hairy eel which has two big, sharp, intelligent eyes and it lives in a stoned hole that goes down and never ends.

At the first of these hills there is a black stinking boy called Hori; he lives under the shadow of the first hill where the dark sounds live.

At the second hill, where nothing can be destroyed, where six olden stones lie, is a dog which is the neighbour to Hori.

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<sup>91</sup> ESR Per. Com., October 20, 2008.





Figure 16: David Windust: Dog

And next to the dog is the hill called the third hill and there, as I said before, in that hole lives the magic eel which can stare at anything, the magic eel that can change into anything it likes.

One day, Hori, the boy took his spear to fight the magic eel; the spear was long and the end was sharp. I pity the black eel, I said this to myself as I looked at the sharpened jagged end of that spear.

At about noon I set off with Hori to fight the magic eel. Across the two hills is a long way to go, and coming to the second hill, I can't go anywhere where the dog lives so Hori shouted out to the dog, "Paru, Paru, Paru" (come here dog) and the dog came out and went with the boy, for the dog knew what the boy was trying to do. It wasn't long before the boy and the dog came to the third hill and there was the stream where the magic eel lived and just by the hole was the eel feeding by the waters edge where the weeds grew. But he saw the boy and shot into the hole but came out again as the ugly man was saying dryly as could be, "What's the meaning of trying to spear me?"

The ugly man stood still and his eyes looked at the ground and I saw that he was brown skinned and wild looking, his ears stuck out and up to a point and his hair was dirty and black coloured even his chin came to a point and when he looked at me I couldn't look back because he looked such a sight. He was magic and strong so I would not fight him, I turned my head away and started to walk away from the ugly man who was an eel that lived in the stream. He was a cruel man, of course, his nose was skinny and his mouth was sharp.



**Figure 17: David Windust: Three Hills series**

The boy shuddered and slid his feet backwards from the jagged entrance to the hole, where the water weeds spring back and up in the current, that comes from the hole that goes down and never ends. And the boy, Hori, shuffled away from the hole on the third hill as the ugly man came towards him.

The boy was terribly frightened of the brown rumped skinned man who came shaking towards him with the black chipped knife pointing out the heart of the black eyed boy. The boy who raised his pigeon spear at the ugly man and who sent it through the ugly man's blood thirsty heart; and as the ugly man lay groaning on the ground, horribly he groaned as he died...

Hori climbed down the ugly man's hole from stone to stone, down the hole that has no end and as he came to where the imps were he saw paintings which told him what to do and they told him wrong things; and there were paintings which turned him away with horror; they were of dead men and some others were horrid designs and while Hori was looking at them he heard strange noises and on the wall a hand just started to move quickly and Hori, frightened, ran further down the hole. And all of a sudden he met a shoal of imps.

He stopped so suddenly that all he said was, "You are...the imps." And the boy in the end asked the imps for power but the imps said they had no power for him, "We have only our own power and we cant give any away and we shall kill you unless you go away for a message has come to us and it tells us to send you away."



Figure 18: David Windust: Inside the Underground Stream, the Three Imps

And the boy ran up the stoned stairs as fast as his legs could carry him; he ran past the stairs where the horrid pictures moved on either side of him and as he ran up the hole he could hear the noises running after him and behind him and they were the imp noises that frightened him.

And the boy came out of the hole with horror and fear and soon he came to the ugly man and he pulled his spear out of his wild heart and the wild man jumped up and half cursed and gave the boy a welting punch and the boy fell deadly on the ground, but soon rose again and ran away for his life and the ugly man stopped to see where the boy went and he saw that he had gone to the third hill and before the ugly man could get to his hole the boy Hori was on his way to talk to the imps again, and he was asking them to help him, help him?...

The ugly man found that he could not go down the hole and that he got all wet and covered with weeds as he tried. He was waiting for the boy at the entrance to the hole and when he came out he caught the boy by the neck: "I'm going to kill you," he said and he pulled his bunch of knives out and he killed the boy and he took the boy's wealth but he pulled the knives out and the boy got up again and when he was right up they fought and fought for hours and hours and the blood was everywhere and the knives were in full action and the chips from the blades were buzzing everywhere and the blood thirsty men fought four hours more and their veins were watering the grass and the grass turned red, because the blood was raining on the grass.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>92</sup> This story features in *In the Early World*, 1964, p. 144.





Figure 19: David Windust, 11 years old, working on one of his 'Three Hills' series, 1956

### Remembering Jack: Excerpts From an Interview with David Windust, 2006

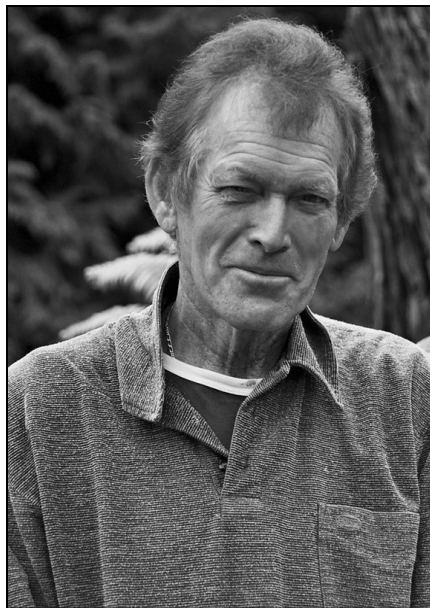


Figure 20: David Windust, October 2006

My interview with David was conducted in his home in Auckland. As well as a copy of *In the Early World*, I brought for discussion a photograph album of his fellow students at Oruaiti and their artwork. The interview was largely unstructured and flowed out of discussion of the photographs and the memories these brought back for David.

David Windust, interview excerpts, October 2006:

Feeding the eels was a favourite pastime. I used to flog the eggs out of my mother's hen house and go down and feed him and she'd say oh there's not many eggs today have you been feeding the eels? I remember those days quite clearly. I've actually never seen eels that big since...I used to feed them with curds off the pig sty and all that sort of thing and some of them were about three or four meters long... they were really huge and I'd put an egg in the water and they'd just open their mouths and take the whole egg.

As you grow up you relate your experiences and you don't forget them. I had a lady friend and her husband died in a diving accident in Whangarei and I came across this creek at her place and I brought these eels all out. I had a few eggs and different things and some milk curdle and I had all these eels coming up to the side just like I used to when I was a kid. And she was amazed. I even patted one on its nose and she said how do you do that? And I said, well, it was just something I learned when I was a kid.

Jack was my pet eel and I caught him in the finish. I wanted to see how big he was. I felt so bad about it. With a hook. I knew I had him too. He was a big eel probably from there to the wall long and about that round and I'd been feeding him for nearly two years and you know – kids. Oh, I couldn't do it now. I caught him and hung him up in the cowshed. I felt really bad about him. I said to myself, why did I do this?

You know I often look back and look through my book [*In The Early World*] from time to time and it brings me back to the good old days – The days when I could have gone skin diving and thinking of all those crayfish there I could have got...where my grandmother went down and speared the crays with the tea tree.<sup>93</sup> I could relate to that and draw. I had dreams in my mind; it's all about relating something to something. And its in our everyday life...as you grow up you relate your experiences and you don't forget them.

...I'm interested in art, it's a matter of interpretation isn't it? Everybody has an individual interpretation of art...and everybody has a different imagination. When you're a child, you tend to say things as you see them and that's exactly what a lot of us did. We all had our pictures and it was our own interpretations of our thoughts, of what was in our mind...I look back now and I think it was good because it gets that

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<sup>93</sup> Tea tree: common name for Manuka (Maori) or *Leptospermum scoparium* in the myrtle family.

child's mind thinking. He's happy in what he's doing...It's good for children in that it gets them to relax and while they're thinking, they're not thinking of anything else. They're thinking about just drawing that picture. I really think that's quite important...I watch my grandchildren coming around here and drawing pictures and you know you've got to pay attention to them...It's important to a child, especially of this creative kind when their minds are developing.

## Chapter 10: A Democratic Child Centred Education

Throughout his work Richardson juggled the tension between allowing children to take the initiative and the need for the teacher to shape, direct and influence the learning environment. In this chapter I draw on interviews with former Oruaiti students, art specialists and artists who spent time at Oruaiti, as well as Richardson's unpublished manuscripts and correspondence, in order to examine his child-centred philosophy and the way these ideas shaped both his understanding of his role as teacher and his pedagogical strategies.

Richardson's formative schooling experiences left him with a commitment to humanitarian teaching methods and a searing dislike of authoritarianism and bureaucracy. His ideas about education were founded upon a rejection of traditional schooling as he had experienced it. He felt he had "been in the devil's pit as a child" and was determined to create a new, rewarding kind of school where all children were valued, respected and encouraged to develop as individuals.<sup>1</sup> Dubbed an 'educational saboteur' by radical New Zealand poet James K Baxter, for his abnegation of the traditional teacher role, Richardson positioned himself as a learner alongside his students, and viewed himself as more of an 'identifier' than a leader.<sup>2</sup> Using the children's own experiences and genuine interests he developed a pedagogical approach which helped children to internalise discriminating criteria for their creative work in all media and to develop aesthetic standards that were continually rising. In doing this he bypassed the curriculum objectives model and reconstructed pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Although Richardson was unequivocally dismissive of educational philosophy in general and stated that he read very little, he did acknowledge John Dewey's influence while he was studying at Auckland Teachers' College:

On the whole you will know now that I ignored or put aside educational philosophy, (but I admit to listening to John Dewey somewhat). I can't

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<sup>1</sup> ESR, Per. Com., October 19, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> James K Baxter, "In the Early World," *Book Review Reprinted in Palmerston North Teachers' College Art Department newsletter*, 1964.

say now what, but I found ‘permissions’ in his writings. Then I put it aside and got on with developing my own philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

On closer examination, Richardson’s view of the educational process was in fact closely aligned with Dewey’s whose ideas about experiential learning I discuss briefly in order to contextualise Richardson’s child-centred philosophy.

### *A Child Centred Philosophy*

Undoubtedly the notions of things thus acquired for oneself are clearer and much more convincing than those acquired from the teaching of others; and not only is our reason not accustomed to slavish submission to authority, but we develop greater ingenuity in discovering relations, connecting ideas and inventing apparatus, than when we merely accept what is given us and allow our minds to be enfeebled. – Rousseau.<sup>4</sup>

While Dewey agreed with Rousseau on the importance of beginning with the child’s individual interests and learning through direct experience, he was critical of the view put forward in Rousseau’s educational treatise *Emile* (1762) that the role of the teacher was to allow the child’s natural powers to develop spontaneously. Dewey’s view of education as a process of growth, discussed in Chapter Five, also made him critical of Froebel’s notion of unfolding, since although unfolding connotated movement, it was movement towards stasis; that is, towards some transcendental end point already predetermined. Dewey argued that to follow these theories to their conclusion would mean that the role of the teacher would become to simply “get out of the way and allow nature to do the work.”<sup>5</sup> Instead of isolating the child from society, as Rousseau advocated, he believed the teacher should work to educate through shaping the educational environment:

The only way in which adults consciously control the kind of education which the immature get is by controlling the environment in which they act and hence think and feel. We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. *Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference.*<sup>6</sup> [Emphasis mine]

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<sup>3</sup> ESR, Per. Com., October 11, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Rousseau, *Emile or on Education*, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> Dewey, 1934, p. 112.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.



The question of ‘chance’ versus ‘designed’ educational environments has been examined in Chapter Five in relation to the art pedagogy of Cizek and the ideas about the innate artistic abilities of children that were taken up by proponents of the new education. It was a question which remained at the centre of the progressive education debate in the postwar era as the theories of the pioneer progressive educators, Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel were taken up by rival factions of the new education movement.<sup>7</sup> Froebel’s concept of unfolding, for instance, provided a rationale for educators at both ends of the progressive debate. Some took his idea of the ‘whole child’ and used it to advocate an education in which individual freedom was amplified to the point where environment and materials were seen as inconsequential to the educational process. Others followed his idea that the educational environment was of critical importance and that the role of the teacher was to create a context using specific materials and equipment to allow the child’s personality to unfold according to preconceived stages of natural development. Others took up Dewey’s notion of experiential learning and wrought the caricature ‘learning though doing’ where sheer activity became synonymous with learning, a misconception Dewey tried repeatedly to correct as he sought to distance himself from the Progressive Education Association in his later years.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1920s, Cremin states, Dewey became increasingly impatient with educational reformers as the well-thought-out ideas of the early progressive educators were “pushed to their ridiculous conclusions.”<sup>9</sup> He was critical in particular of the widespread belief in progressive schools that an orderly organisation of subject-matter was “hostile to the needs of students in their individual character” and argued instead that “individuality in children is something developing and to be continuously attained, not something given all at once and ready-made.”<sup>10</sup> In *The Child and the Curriculum*, for example, he stated:

Appealing to the interest upon the present plane means excitation; it means playing with a power so as continually to stir it up without directing it toward definite achievement. Continuous initiation, continuous starting of activities that do not arrive, is, for all practical

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<sup>7</sup> Cremin, 1964, p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> Jay Martin, one of Dewey’s biographers states that when a reporter mentioned Dewey’s motto “learning by doing,” Dewey made a correction, “I don’t believe people learn merely by doing. The important things are the ideas that a man puts into his doing. Unintelligent doing will result in his learning the wrong things.” Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 477.

<sup>9</sup> Martin, 2002, p. 184.

<sup>10</sup> John Dewey: “Progressive Education and the Science of Education,” *Progressive Education*, V (1928), 197-204, cited in Cremin, 1964, pp. 234-235.

purposes, as bad as the continual repression of initiative in conformity with supposed interests of some more perfect thought or will. It is as if the child were forever tasting and never eating; always having his palate tickled upon the emotional side, but never getting the organic satisfaction that comes only with the digestion of food and transformation of it into working power.<sup>11</sup>

In particular, Cremin observes, Dewey was disturbed by the lack of adult guidance in child-centred progressive schools. In an address to the Progressive Education Association (PEA) in 1928, Dewey chided:

Such a method is really stupid. For it attempts the impossible which is always stupid; and it misconceives the conditions of independent thinking. There are a multitude of ways of reacting to surrounding conditions, and without some guidance from experience these reactions are almost sure to be causal, sporadic, and ultimately fatiguing...<sup>12</sup>

Dewey's Laboratory School at the University of Chicago was not a 'free environment' in the sense that critics of progressive education took child-centred to mean. Jay Martin, states that the curriculum in Dewey's school was in fact far removed from the "clichés about the freedom of progressive education."<sup>13</sup>

There was not a single elective in it; it was as systematic as any scientific investigation. Education in Dewey's hands was the means to achieve a democratic end. But to be of any value, this was to be done through scientific rigour and constant experiment. ...Every child in some sense was turned into a researcher whose duty was to discover and satisfy his or her own capacities and needs and then, also to discover how this had been done.<sup>14</sup>

Martin cites Dewey complaining in 1950, "Why do writers and teachers insist on saddling me with the 'child centred' school? Anyone who has read me knows that it is the socially centred school I have sought."<sup>15</sup> For Dewey, education was a two-sided process, one "psychological" the other "sociological."<sup>16</sup> Neither of these, he believed could "be

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<sup>11</sup> John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum, and the School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1963] (1956)), p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> John Dewey: "Progressive Education and the Science of Education," *Progressive Education*, V (1928), 197-204, cited in Cremin, 1964, pp. 234-235; see also, Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 503.

<sup>13</sup> Martin, *The Education of John Dewey*, p. 496.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 498.

<sup>16</sup> John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," *The School Journal* LIV, no. 3 (1897), pp. 77-80.

subordinated to the other or neglected without evil results following.”<sup>17</sup> He viewed the psychological as the foundation, where the child’s own “instincts and powers” provided the beginning for all learning, but he held that it was essential for the teacher to “interpret” and “translate” the psychological into “social equivalents,” that is, “into terms of what individuals are capable of in the way of social service.”<sup>18</sup> Because of their greater experience, he argued, it was the duty and obligation of teachers to guide students in their learning.<sup>19</sup> Such guidance, Dewey argued, did not mean external imposition, but like a map helped to:

...Arrange an orderly view of previous experience, serves as a guide to future experience; it gives direction; it facilitates control; it economises effort, preventing useless wandering, and pointing out the paths which lead most quickly and most certainly to a desired result.”<sup>20</sup>

Cremin suggests that one of the reasons the progressive education movement lost its momentum was that in addition to the fragmentation and distortion of these carefully thought out early philosophies, there was a “negativism” inherent in the movement.<sup>21</sup> He observes:

Like many protestors against injustice, the early progressives knew better what they were against than what they were for. .... There was much to be against, but a protest is not a programme. Shibboleths like “the whole child” or “creative self expression” stirred the faithful to action and served as powerful battering rams against the old order, but in classroom practice they were not very good guides to positive action. At least the generation that invented them had an idea of what they meant. The generation that followed after them had a collection of ready-made clichés – clichés that were not helpful when the public began to raise searching questions about the schools.<sup>22</sup>

### *A Problem With Progressivism*

Richardson, too, had difficulties with what passed for progressive education. The challenge Richardson saw at the heart of the problem of progressive educational reform was one of replacing traditional education with something of real value. His pedagogical

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Dewey, [1963] (1956), p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Cremin, 1964, p. 348.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.348.

response was to turn to the children and their genuine interests for guidance and to develop teaching strategies based on this. Although his position was in this sense child-centred, he believed with Dewey that “nothing can be developed from nothing” and that it was futile to expect the child to “work things out for himself without being supplied any of the enviroing conditions which are requisite to start and guide thought.”<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, he viewed his role as more of a guide than a teacher in the traditional sense, his task being not to direct, but to question, wonder, observe and identify. He was, he observed, “some kind of head parent, mahita, friend, professor, source of inspiration...”<sup>24</sup>

Although his own impetus for educational reform was anchored in rejection of the type of schooling he had experienced himself, unlike some of the more radical reformers, Richardson knew what he ‘stood for.’ The growth in his students’ understanding, artistic accomplishments and the organisational structure he witnessed in this process, affirmed his scientific orientation towards the construction of knowledge and provided a vivid demonstration for him of the pitfalls and paradoxes inherent in the progressive education credo. While Dewey urged educational reformers to look beyond the frame of ‘progressivism,’<sup>25</sup> Richardson rejected the mantle of a ‘progressive educator’ outright stating:

...I was told that I was progressive...I have to say that the word and classification appals me! Could I convince you that it is meaningless?...I said before that I called Oruaiti School an ‘experiment;’ and hence ‘experimental programme school’...I wish you could ignore the need, if there is one, to describe a ‘progressive’ institution.<sup>26</sup>...The term ‘progressive’ disturbs me because it puts Oruaiti, and me, in a basket of some fairly dodgy philosophies. It is thrown around much in the USA, I found. And it wasn’t always good! For instance, the Aspen School<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dewey, [1963] (1956) p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> ESR., Per. Com., August 23, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Dewey himself urged educational reformers to look beyond the frame of ‘progressivism.’ His book *Experience and Education* was largely an attempt to restate his philosophical position with reference to the clichés and misinterpretations that had emerged in the two preceding decades (Cremin, 1964, pp. 326-327). In the preface Dewey suggests that progressives “should think in terms of Education itself rather than in terms of some ‘ism, about education, even such an ‘ism, as “progressivism.” For in spite of itself, any movement that thinks and acts in terms of an ‘ism becomes so involved in reaction against other ‘isms that it is unwittingly controlled by them. For it then forms its principles by reaction against them instead of by a comprehensive, constructive survey of actual needs, problems and possibilities” (Dewey, 1938, p. 6).

<sup>26</sup> ESR., Per. Com., February 3, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> The Aspen Community School was founded in 1970 by a group of parents seeking progressive educational alternatives for their children. New Zealand educator, Sylvia Ashton Warner, who was held in high regard in the United States following the publication of her book *Spinster* in 1958, was recruited to help establish the school. She records this experience in her book *Spearpoint: Teacher in America* (1972). While he was working for the University of Colorado, Richardson visited the Aspen Community School. He also had the opportunity on one occasion to observe Ashton-Warner taking a class (ESR Per. Com., Jan 6, 2007).

programme, which I saw as ‘undisciplined squads of emotion,’ was called just that!<sup>28</sup>

The designation of Oruaiti as an ‘experimental school’ resonated with Richardson because his methods for getting an emotional involvement were manifested in systematic processes of collection, evaluation, analysis and formulation. He explains:

These methods concerned themselves with the collection of material e.g. words, botany specimens, phrases, different spellings, shells, insects etc...then the sorting and grading, disregarding irrelevancies when we could see them, analysis and arranging, and then formulating some kind of generalisation through solving the relationship that exists between the elements being examined. Finally there was the relating of the principle with subsequent long-term re-examination of the relative truth. In short the methods of the scientist became those of the poet and artist.<sup>29</sup>

Richardson’s dislike of the term ‘progressive’ was twofold. Firstly, he saw the word itself as so vague as to be virtually empty, a view articulated well by Kliebard in *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958*.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, he found that where progressive philosophies were articulated in schools he visited they almost uniformly lacked a foundation of shared scientific, artistic or logical beliefs as a basis for this. He outlined his objections as follows:

Progressive School: The words don’t mean a thing to me, jargon even. The range of interpretation is enormous. A much-used word in the USA for the smart set schools, “ahead in affluence” is what it means with those. I heard of and saw very, very few modest school philosophies which excelled and could be said to be ‘progressive’ – better than the usual, going places, renowned for say sport (the usual); music (some) art (none). Margaret, I’d hate to be known as a ‘Progressive.’ I always said I was ‘experimental,’ a ‘laboratory,’ until I ran into the name in Illinois for a school I headed for a while. I used words like ‘expressive; ‘creative’. I meant ‘discovery’ but never said that...Oruaiti was an inventive environment for learning though the creative arts and language in the broad sense...experimental...was the word which I used all along.

<sup>28</sup> ESR, Per. Com., Mar 04, 2008: Richardson borrows a line from T.S Eliot’s 1935 poem “The Four Quartets:” And so each venture / Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate / With shabby equipment always deteriorating / In the general mess of imprecision of feeling / Undisciplined squads of emotion.

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, Unpublished MS, Draft introduction written by for the Pantheon edition of *In The Early World*, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418 Bx 17 c3/1 In *The Early World USA*, 1968-1970, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Kliebard states: “I was frankly puzzled by what was meant by the innumerable references I had seen to progressive education. The more I studied this the more it seemed to me that the term encompasses such a broad range, not just of different but of contradictory ideas on education as to be meaningless. In the end I came to believe the term as not only vacuous, but mischievous. It was not just the word “progressive” that I thought was inappropriate but the implication that something deserving a single name existed and that something could be identified and defined if only we tried....” Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum: 1893-1958*, p. xi.

The thing wrong about the word is that we ‘arrived’ and reached a level of competency, which was not experimental anymore.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that he saw the growth of the children’s work arise out of a base of shared values, convinced Richardson that he was never ‘a progressive’ and rapidly ceased to be experimental in the sense that he understood the term. He argued, “I’m quite sure that education in ‘progressive’ education, or anywhere, fails because it lacks a values base. There must be constant evaluation as we go, day by day...All education succeeds or fails on that basis...”<sup>32</sup> It was his unease with the notion of experimentation in the absence of a cohesive values base, for example, which fuelled his reluctance to have his own work aligned with the Northern Maori Project (NMP) schools. While he admired the reformist intent of this project, he felt Tovey’s emphasis on movement, dance and rhythm was a specialised and somewhat essentialising foundation upon which to base a curriculum, a feeling that was exacerbated by his uneasiness that the project was both inspired and directed by Pakeha. While he was impressed with the calibre of some of the individual teachers involved in the NMP he was not able to overcome his objections to what he termed “the Maoris dancing to the Pakeha mode.”<sup>33</sup> For Richardson, the term ‘progressive’ suggested precisely the kind of specialisation the Northern Maori Project embodied – the New Zealand equivalent of the focus on music, sport, or freedom, for instance, which defined the liberal schools he visited in the United States.

Although Richardson’s work could also be viewed as specialised in that he used art as an entry point into other subject areas, his orientation to art was founded on a strong scientific basis. Further, he did not emphasise art to the exclusion of core subjects and was scrupulous about covering all areas of the curriculum, a fact borne out by his high professional gradings and his pupils’ experiences of being ahead academically when they entered high school after Oruaiti.<sup>34</sup> Former student Barbara Spiller,<sup>35</sup> for example, who left school for work at fourteen, recalls a general structure to the daily schedule of learning:

There was a large chunk of creativity in the school day, but there *is* a *but* in there – it didn’t take away from learning about things that are not considered art. He seemed to have a fairly good disciplined routine, of

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<sup>31</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 31, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> ESR, Per. Com., July 2, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Interviews David Iggulden (April 24, 2006); Varley Foster (April 1, 2006); Rewi Henare (August 23, 2005); Eric Lloyd (3 April, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Spiller (Nee Henare).

arithmetic, handwriting and composition and then grammar and I'm pretty sure that we knew what was going to happen through the day. On the other hand, I have a sense that the sense of creativeness probably crossed over from the art studies, into other lesson blocks but not in a fashion that diverted from it so much as added to it... It was as though he simply extracted as much from a situation as he could in terms of imparting knowledge in a broad sense. For instance, if he was teaching about an arts subject of some sort – I have recollections that he might have talked some mathematics into it in some way. And maybe even expressed some descriptive kind of language into it – and in that way it was almost a holistic kind of a lesson. He certainly encouraged everyone to think beyond black and white and just where they could then imagine.<sup>36</sup>

Potter Barry Brickell, who as a teenager sometimes assisted Richardson with pottery, saw Elwyn's approach as follows:

Elwyn worked on the principle: It's not the thing, but how. If you want to teach arithmetic to young kids, you don't slam it down their throats, you make it interesting for them, then they want to learn. ... This is why I said there's no such thing as teaching, if you want to be a real educator you've got to understand the principle that learning is more important than teaching. It's the carrot versus the stick. And Elwyn was one who practiced this with perfection. That's why the kids learnt good arithmetic and why they learnt good writing and poetry what's more. It wasn't just art, art was the means to the learning...<sup>37</sup>

In considering Richardson's child-centred and integrated curricular approach, it becomes apparent why he considered both the definition of Oruaiti as a progressive school and as an experiment in art and craft as wide of the mark.

## **The Individual and the Social**

For Richardson, individuality trumped culture in a way that was unique for his times. In *In The Early World*, for instance, he sought to emphasise the individuality of each student's work and did not distinguish Maori from Pakeha when presenting children's work. Richardson's interpretation of culture was broad and echoed that of Boyd H. Bode, who astutely observed that "Whether a subject is cultural or not is determined, not by any trait inherent in the subject itself, but by the contribution that it makes to the development of the individual."<sup>38</sup> At the same time, he viewed his role as one of reinforcing cultural values

<sup>36</sup> Barbara Spiller, Interview, May 23, 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Barry Brickell, Interview, October 6, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Bode, *Modern Educational Theories*. p. 264.

and shared Dewey's belief that "the teacher is engaged not simply in the training of the individual but in the formation of the proper social life."<sup>39</sup> He regarded the child as part of the community in which both the environment and social organisation were powerful forces and viewed his purpose at Oruaiti in broad social terms:

I set out to help them to like and enjoy as adequate an education as I could deliver.... I set out to construct a humane, caring, mini society where we got most of our satisfactions from personal creation in many ways and subjects.<sup>40</sup>

He recalls as a teacher he was viewed by many as an "adjunct of the families" and worked to support the parents' values.<sup>41</sup> In some instances, for example, at the request of parents, he allowed several of his Brethren students to stay on after completing primary school until they were legally old enough to leave school without having to attend high school. It was a breach of departmental regulations he called "the human necessity brought to education."<sup>42</sup>

Richardson recognised that while every subject or theme taken up by his students was personally felt, it was also a social experience. He saw the development of his students' individuality as inextricably linked to the broader democratic social good. As John Melser observes in his introduction to *In the Early World*, "[t]he school functioned as a community not in spite of but because of the individualism of its members – each person counted and was expected to make a contribution to its life...the primary demand on the child was that he should think through to exactly what he observed, felt or believed."<sup>43</sup>

Richardson sought to establish close links between the school and the community through involving parents in environmental studies and by bringing in specialists from outside the Department of Education, such as people from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Industrial and Scientific Research and the Maori Women's Welfare League. Former student Eric Lloyd recalls the pet days and sporting activities that brought the community together as well as the visitors Richardson invited to talk to the students:

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<sup>39</sup> Dewey, 1897, p. 439.

<sup>40</sup> ESR, Per. Com., October 19, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> ESR, Per. Com., July 29, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> ESR, Per. Com., October 26, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Richardson, 1964, p. vii.



He used to bring in these old Maori like you know the Ministers and different ladies that had done well and the Maori Woman's Welfare league. He'd bring one or two of those along to the school about once a year and they'd ask us what do we want to do and they'd say, "Well we don't want to see you boys on the side of the road with pick and shovel on the Ministry work." [Laughs] Yeah they were quite – they used to rub it into us to "go to school, get a good education."<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the presence of art specialists such as Jim Allen, Ralph Hotere, Selwyn Muru, Dick Seelye, who worked alongside the children in an expert mentoring role, led to the growth of what Richardson termed a 'large family syndrome', which was more akin to a community of artists than a conventional school. Varley Foster, a former student, recalls:

I remember Jim Allen and another bloke, that fella with the railway on the Corromandel, Barry Brickell. They sort of taught us by hanging out with us – more of a sort of befriending us. And just showing us what they were doing, finding out what we were doing wrong – the same as you'd do a friend.<sup>45</sup>

The arrival of Muru Walters, Art Advisor, Maori All Black and winner of the French Cup for best Maori footballer of the year in 1957, is remembered with incredulity by former students. Barbara Spiller recalls:

...One of the funny things that happened when I look back was that we had the footballer, I think it was Muru Walters, came to the school and taught us would you believe how to do fancy work, fancy stitching...That blew me away when I thought about it in later life, I thought good heavens, you know, there's this man arrived, and sat there and taught us how to do handwork.<sup>46</sup>

David Iggulden also remembers his visit:

I can also remember a guy called Muru Walters because he was a Maori All Black and he was the art teacher who came! [Laughs] ...We built this big kiln, huge kiln, and he came ...I'm not sure whether he was a teacher or anything or whether he was just a potter per se at that point, but he treated us well – as equals I suppose, it was sort of quite amazing that here were these other potters talking about this whole thing and how we did things and made our glazes and what we did and put our ochres on and that.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Eric Lloyd, Interview, April 3, 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Varley Foster, Interview, April 1, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara Spiller, Interview, May 23, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> David Iggulden, April 24, 2006.

## Fostering Individuality

Richardson held that unless students' expressive work was motivated by their own genuine interests and allowed to progress according to their individual level of conception the work would not result in a real development of the child's abilities. He recognised that when the children's work arose out of their own interests it had an intimate connection to their own experience and was suited to their individual level of ability. If this personal relevance was lacking, he believed, the resulting products would be "phoney" and ultimately mis-educative.<sup>48</sup> It was therefore of vital importance that the teacher did not direct the child's abilities towards ways of expression that were not in tune with the child's individual level of conception, in art or in language. David Windust's integrated study of Jack exemplifies Richardson's belief in the importance of authentic expression.

Richardson's observations on teaching creative writing also serve to illustrate this point. In an unpublished manuscript, he describes a child in an English class he observed who wrote the following passage:

### Scenery

Down the end of ...Street the road comes abruptly to an end. A track continues on through the pine trees that sway continuously in the breeze. And as I wandered lonely as a cloud of frosted snow a spider dangled from his web and performed for all the world. On a branch of golden brown a tiny bird preached his song so grand. While swaying down by the foot of a tree, grasses floated in the ruffling breeze. All was peaceful and so quiet that dreams lingered in the air and there was no fear as the leaves chuckled lovingly on.

But the next day at noon the peace was shattered and all was alive. The animals and insects scurried about finding new homes in which to live. The trees swayed more than ever in the breeze...the end lingered for these beautiful trees. The truck and tractor stood there noisily ringing through the air as the trees were felled ...one by one the shadows clouded over the sun. I was at home when I heard them pull out. The trees were aboard the huge logging truck and I guess in the bush nothing was at rest as the inhabitants sought new homes, perhaps for the best.<sup>49</sup>

Richardson cites the above piece, as an example of a child who "has absorbed the teacher's directions so well that he can call to mind those many pretty expressions that

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<sup>48</sup> ESR, Per. Com., July 29, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Unpublished MS, Self Awareness and Creative Language Teaching, Ch 5, p. 4.

make this story what it is.”<sup>50</sup> Writing like this does not happen, he suggests, without adult imposition:

It is uncommon to see children’s work subject to much corrective criticism other than along the lines of its functional facility, but Charlie’s writing is damaging because it is based upon ideas that must have been superimposed upon the child’s own natural ability to express himself. While it is apparent that Charlie has some kind of feeling for creatures and trees, his expression is spoiled by the insincerity of anthropomorphism and this writing hides from us what kind of person Charlie really is.<sup>51</sup>

In Richardson’s view, such writing reflects the fact that the child “has not been taught to know himself.”<sup>52</sup> He has “not learned how he feels and thinks about himself and what he does, has not had time to think about his feelings in relation to actions, and probably has not made any judgements about his feelings.”<sup>53</sup> Richardson’s central concern with this kind of mimicking of “pretty expressions” was that it takes the child further away from himself in a way that is damaging to the child’s sense of self identity and natural ability to express himself.<sup>54</sup> To help children who were struggling in this way move forward, both in writing and other forms of expressive work, Richardson employed the same pedagogical questioning strategy as he did with the children’s thematic studies discussed previously, but in this case the questions were designed to take the child back to the beginning of the experience to re-examine their feelings and original thoughts and perceptions.

Richardson contrasts the ‘*Scenery*’ story above with a piece of writing by a student (also from another school) on the set topic of “Someone I saw in the holidays”. Richardson singled this piece out as reflecting sincere expression, which was then sanitised by the teacher into ‘clean English’.

Oo my toe is shining is it cooked?

Vun day I went up Ohouway the man put his doe in da cooked bool den he pulled it out again and said oo my toe is shinning snodder day hath come is dere a cook in da bool? tho he dived in da bool and wen I was in da bool he came queeming out full cock by da cook

A cook a duck.

de end.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

My attempted interpretation of Reg's original piece is as follows:

Oo my toe is shining is it cooked?

[One day I went up Ohaeawai the man put his toe in the cooked pool then he pulled it out again and said ooh my toe is shining, hotter than, how come, is there a cook in the pool? So he dived in the pool and when I was in the pool he came screaming out fully cooked by the cook. A cooked duck. The end.]

Richardson's view was that although this student was obviously "a bit of a joker," he was trying to say something that was "personal and fitting".<sup>55</sup> The student's teacher, however, had him correct this piece into the following form:

Oo my toe is shining is it cooked?      Kaikoke

Up Kaikoke I've been to the hot baths with my father. I put my toe in and when I pulled it out it was hot. Then I put it back again and then I pulled it out it was very hot and then I didn't put it in. I saw a bath outside in the open because I didn't see someone inside. I didn't have any lunch. After lunch we went home, "goodbye."

Richardson's response to this corrected version was as follows:

Reg has conveyed more meaning with his straightened out version, but the story has lost all its vitality, and its meaning to Reg as a person. Other damaging things probably have happened to him along the way as well. Reg certainly lost some of the dignity of his personal ways of saying things – for instance: "One day I went up Ohaiwai" [sic] is idiomatic of the cub-culture of English spoken by New Zealand Maoris and is fully accepted as correct English at the level of informal communication. If we take away such a large part of Reg's personal identity, he may well fail with the rest.<sup>56</sup>

What would have happened to this piece of writing at Oruaiti? Would the other children have understood it? Would its author have been led or helped to improve and clarify it while preserving its original meaning and verve? In Richardson's classroom, the children were often the first and best critics of their peers' work. They understood each other's experiences and were forthright and genuine in their criticisms and enthusiasms. Richardson believed that real learning for children arose out of a "process of taking in information and making it part of their inner context" a personal process he saw as far

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

removed from didactic learning.<sup>57</sup> His assessment strategy of selecting the better elements of a piece of creative writing through class discussion led to growth in individual expression as well as to the establishment of a shared set of class values and criteria for expressive work.

It would be difficult to exaggerate how atypical Richardson's position on this was, at a time when education officials remained obstinately opposed to the teaching of Maori language in schools and school inspectors widely believed that all Maori children suffered from difficulties with written language.<sup>58</sup> Typical comments from school inspectors on the teaching of English in these years for instance, included:

...At Rangitukia in 1952, 'Drill work must be used to overcome "Maorisms"'; Tokomaru Bay in 1954, 'Eradicate the common spelling mistakes and many Maori errors'...[at] Hiruharama in 1959, 'In written expression while pupils showed good ideas the expression of these was often marred by the use of Maori idiom.'<sup>59</sup>

At the heart of Richardson's unease with the teacher's 'cleansing' influence on Reg's 'hot pools' piece was a moral concern about the deception involved in promoting a model or style of writing which was itself based on an adult conception of how to reflect what is real in writing. This was as true for language work as it was for art and was reflected in Richardson's orientation towards assessment, discussed subsequently.

Richardson's belief in the importance of authentic expression was also apparent in the emphasis he placed on the role of the imagination in intellectual work. He hoped his students would become what he called "original imagists," which implied a higher level of personal intensity in expressive work. He practiced a constant sensitivity to happenings in the environment.<sup>60</sup> This in turn encouraged his students to explore the opportunities and themes that occupied them personally, concerns Richardson termed their "commitments of mind."<sup>61</sup> He recalls a personal study by Eric Lloyd which spanned four weeks and began after watching a large herd of cattle go past the school. This led to a series of clay

<sup>57</sup> Richardson, *Into a Further World*. p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> Barrington, *Separate but Equal? Maori Schools and the Crown 1867-1969*. p. 300.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>60</sup> See *In The Early World* pp. 157-166 for an account of the learning that arose out of the children's discovery of a giant wasp's nest. The hive was found after the children pursued a wasp that had landed on an apple core on the classroom windowsill.

<sup>61</sup> ESR, Per. Com., February 15, 2006.

sculptures of bulls and a study of different types of farm boundaries expressed in several lino cuts.<sup>62</sup>

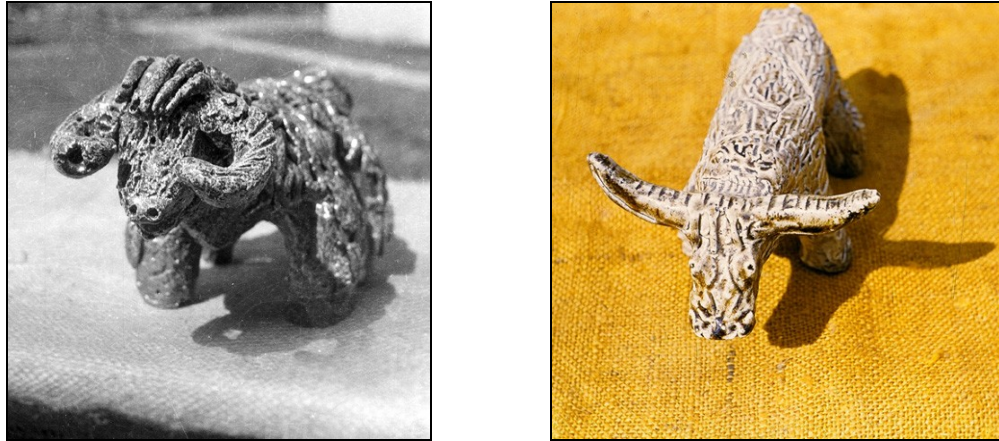


Figure 21: Clay Bulls by Eric Lloyd

Richardson found that in some rare instances where children were encouraged to delve deeply into their own lives and imaginations and to develop their creative responses ‘personal myths’ were born. He cites David Windust’s *Three Hills* story as an example of the rare progression from image to myth which possessed a “spiritual quality.”<sup>63</sup> Richardson recalls only three or four such examples of personal myths over his thirteen years at Oruaiti and states that he was most careful in his responses to these:

I stood back and observed these happenings. I did not promote them, nor would I have done so. I gave them their head. The myth and its need to be created is, in essence, far beyond the range or limits of what might be inspired. The myth is a personal treasure.<sup>64</sup>

### ***The Growth of Aesthetic Standards***

It is not what the teacher tells the kids; it’s what they know and feel themselves. When a true values structure is at work, one feels and knows the excitements of such qualities. It’s almost in the air!...The values of Oruaiti, I always said were in the minds and hearts of my tamariki.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Richardson, 2001, p. 70.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 31, 2006.

When Richardson first began at Oruaiti he reinforced aesthetic values by expressing his delight in the children's ceramics, prints and paintings and putting his "valued acceptance" upon their works.<sup>66</sup> Almost immediately he came to see that his students had an intuitive ability to assess each other's artwork. They could recognise, for example, that someone's artwork was much better than their own. As a teacher he saw his role not so much teaching the children 'what was good' in art, as unlocking their reception of aesthetics and of giving them a language of communication for this. To this end, he established a formal weekly meeting for group discussion and evaluation of work and a self-published school magazine in which to feature children's creative work. At weekly meetings, the students selected work for classroom displays and for publication in their magazine. The weekly evaluation meeting was run democratically and Richardson said very little:

They ran it as they felt the need. I always knew and felt that one could not and should not 'force the moment to a crisis' with values. I said so little! It was not my business but theirs. It was the one thing which hardly anyone saw as they watched, nor understood.<sup>67</sup>

Richardson found that the effect of the group discussions was to stimulate further creation:

It was as if statement 'a' led to 'b' and even Z! An ultimo! Even my (non verbal) placing of an item in a place of significance supported an idea for reinforcing the individual's theme. "Go to it, think further – statement A is great – continue mes enfants!"...Even if I did not select and promote a painting, whatever, the process still went on. The artists learned almost at once that the process of A to B to C etc. was within their grasp. In a brief period, very close to the beginning, we had a clear philosophical process before us. No longer did we paint say, mum doing the washing, then fishing for a snapper. We kept more often to a theme – an individual personal one. So my tamariki were making all these departures...and one person's ideas livened up another to consider the same ideas.<sup>68</sup>

Art appreciation was another method through which Richardson sought to develop aesthetic standards and was a further point upon which his approach diverged from the departmental position promoted by Tovey. Like Cizek, Tovey firmly believed that children should not be exposed to adult art and even went so far as to openly oppose the purchase of a large collection of coloured slides of art works from European galleries for

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<sup>66</sup> ESR, Per. Com., August 25, 2007.

<sup>67</sup> ESR, Per. Com., July 2, 2007.

<sup>68</sup> ESR, Per. Com., August 25, 2007.

use in New Zealand schools by Beeby while he was in Paris.<sup>69</sup> Art advisor, Jeanne Macaskill, explains that Tovey's position was in part a response to the fact that traditional art education had emphasised the copying of great masters with the result that many students had a good knowledge of the biography of famous artists and of particular techniques such as "pointillism," but little understanding of what their paintings were really about. In addition, there was the widely-held belief that having children copy adult art conveyed the message that their own work was inferior. The abandonment of art appreciation as a subject from the curriculum altogether was therefore seen as a step in the right direction. In contrast, at Oruaiti, as well as being inspired by the work of their peers and the products of visiting art advisors and potters such as Jim Allen, Ralph Hotere and Barry Brickell, books supplied by the Country Library Service on fine art, poetry, geography and social studies ensured the children's exposure to broad range of art work.

Of perhaps equal significance to the weekly evaluation sessions and art appreciation in the development of aesthetic standards was the fact that Richardson positioned himself as a learner alongside his students in the art activities. In this way, he became part of the class and his input was debated and occasionally rejected for good reasons. He states:

I began to write, to pot, mould, make, carve alongside my tamariki – I had to grow, I'd think...I became a reasonable Oruaiti "kid" when I did that. I remember how my tamariki smiled at me then. They commented on it and gave me their opinions, no soft stuff either! And so by small steps alongside my kids, I became an Oruaiti kid.<sup>70</sup>

I was really teaching aesthetics. Living by it, responding and teaching it to my tamariki. I was always there asking the values question! How good is that? Is there time and room for more? Will you look further again at this idea? Would you consider a bigger one? A fatter pot? A night scene, etc? How do you feel about it? Will you want to say more? In another way?<sup>71</sup>

I was absolutely positive in my delight about, say, a painting, pot or print's, effect on me, as were the tamariki. Indeed I learned, or we learned from each other...I was part of the art process in ongoing appreciation as the Tamariki were. No one dodged an expression of praise but negative comments never arose. In writing I indicated enthusiastically above well-said things, words, figures of speech et al. I usually read the best work out in our literature discussions. So I was a leader in the promulgation of the best. I identified and reinforced quality

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<sup>69</sup> Henderson, 1998, pp. 154-155.

<sup>70</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 12, 2006.

<sup>71</sup> ESR, Per. Com., April 1, 2008.



expression...I was an identifier. I made sure that *nothing* was *lost*, all good was valued. I was an *after the event* reader/art critic. My tamariki were writers, poets, storytellers, painters, pot makers in their own right.<sup>72</sup>

A significant outcome of this process was that creative satisfactions derived from art and crafts not only provided a basis for growth and enjoyment but also seemed to negate unruly behaviour.<sup>73</sup> It led to the growth of a school culture, Richardson found, where “mutual respect floated between a large number of us.”<sup>74</sup> When, for example, a student with severe behaviour problems was enrolled in the school (largely because of the school’s social isolation) he found that this culture was tested and sought help from his students to deal with the child constructively. After a somewhat fraught beginning, clay work offered a breakthrough for the student to experience success and gain confidence and his behaviour gradually improved. Reflecting on this incident, Richardson states:

I told the story of Nick<sup>75</sup> because here was a case of violent behaviour and an antisocial one that came in to destroy our culture. Yet our culture stood firm! Most, but I’d have to say, not all, got to like ‘old Nick’ as I heard him affectionately called. Martha held him somehow in her heart. She felt for Nick. Kids asked when Nick was away for the day (he seemed to tire a lot), “Why does Nick say fuck?” ...He wasn’t there to answer. Older pupils (of both sexes) gave answers, which I don’t remember because the issue was a personal one of getting an understanding of Nick and what sort of bloke he was and would be.<sup>76</sup>

Such frank and open discussion is indicative of a school culture where interpersonal relationships were characterised by mutual esteem and understanding. Richardson believed that what he identified as the ‘social reform factor’ was the product of intensely felt expressive work and social behaviour in a permissive environment.<sup>77</sup> Barry Brickell’s view was as follows:

What Elwyn did was he brought out the individual character of every kid and recognised their individual talents. He didn't want to make them belong to a school shall we say of uniformity or conformity. He brought

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<sup>72</sup> ESR, Per. Com., July 29, 2007 (Italics Richardson’s).

<sup>73</sup> ESR, Per. Com., December 7, 2005.

<sup>74</sup> ESR, Per. Com., February 10, 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Pseudonym.

<sup>76</sup> ESR, Per. Com., February 11, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

out their individual natures which means they lost the potential to become violent.<sup>78</sup>

Former students found that the combination of Richardson's rapport with the students and his use of the arts as an entry point to learning challenged them in a way that benefited their work across all subjects. Varley Foster observed:

You know your mind has to work a lot harder with art than we think it does... There's a lot more to it than we see. I do think it made us think, because the children in Oruaiti there, were I think better educated than they were from the schools around that had a more formal kind of education. Because we were thinking, you know, and developing our brains. The other stuff comes, you know, you pick it up around. We were sort of a little above the other fellas – our education skills at the time. We had some come in from other schools there and we found them to be you know, quite dumb. They were behind us. We had quite a few children came in that had been at the convent and we found those a little bit different for a while too. They had to adjust to the culture that we'd developed there, they were a year or more behind us.

The kids in the other schools was still getting belted and that, they were still getting the strap. Where Elwyn had knocked that off and no one misbehaved and what have you. The children had more trust in him and he was sort of a friend to us rather than a person standing there knocking off a lot of stuff that was above our heads to us.<sup>79</sup>

Eric Lloyd too, found that Richardson's approach taught him values.

He never used to make us do any lines or nothing. He was real good. I liked him. He learnt us respect. Respect was what ... Mr. Richardson learnt us from real young age. Yeah, I think that was one of the most important things that I can think of anyway. ... That's what I've got to thank him for anyway. He was like a big Dad eh. That's exactly how he used to treat us. He never used to yell – and his maths too was very good. We learned. He had a simple way of teaching maths – and we went on to be pretty good at maths you know. Once you understand how it works, its pretty good you know. I can still race those computers. [Laughs]<sup>80</sup>

Barbara Spiller recalls Richardson's light touch as a teacher:

...He had a kind way of dealing with everybody I suppose, I can't think of the word that I really want. *Kindness* was in it, but he encouraged children to interact with him rather than just sort of standing there and

<sup>78</sup> Barry Brickell, Interview October 6, 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Varley Foster, Interview, April 1, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Eric Lloyd, Interview, April 3, 2006.

saying right do this, do that, do the other thing and so on. My memory of him is that he encouraged some responses, even when we were perhaps having difficulty expressing an idea for instance in art, he would come and talk with us and *guide* or *lead*, but in a way that didn't seem to be doing any of those, *draw out something* from within us that took us in a direction. You know he was very good at helping the children to actually express *themselves* rather than an idea that he'd planted.

I remember the mornings as being times that he would encourage everyone (and it's only again in looking back that I realise this is what he was doing) – that he would encourage everyone to settle into the day and talk about the things that – whatever was there to talk about...I guess I'll call them morning talks, which I don't actually think they particularly were. But he would encourage people to talk about things happening in their lives. And very frequently we would wind up by actually getting involved in one of those things and making it a study and that was interesting. It was actually very clever when I think about it, because the person, who brought it of course felt so great about the thing, that he would make every effort to get more information and so on, and the others were interested because it was something that *related to their world* at the time... It was interesting. It fitted the environment I suppose rather than learning about Greece or something else that we didn't relate to. We were actually looking at something we all understood because it was in our environment.

I don't think he ever sat down to have his lunch. Because he would be around. You know we went through from primers I think up to standard one, it might have been standard six. It was a big wide range of ages. And so there was lots going on all over the place and it wasn't a teeny school, there was a field as well as a big concreted play area as well as the school itself and a tree area where there was one of those rope swings. So there was quite a lot of places that different groupings gathered but he probably covered everyone of those groups all throughout the lunchtime and stood and talked to them. And even there he would be teaching without making a big thing of it. It never really seemed like he was teaching us, its more in retrospect that I see that he was, because we would probably be doing an activity that we could learn from and he would just simply bring it into the conversation and so on.

I've noticed with different things over the years with the children that I've worked with and I'm not a teacher, that when you take them to school, the environment does not support much interaction between teacher and pupil unless it's in the classroom. And much of the time it would be "So and so come and sit down over here, you kids go and do that, you do that" – it's a directive, corrective kind of situation. Where as with him it was almost as though everywhere he went there was something to be discussed and something to be learnt from whatever was going on here at the time. He never really made it look as though he was wandering around looking at what you were doing or checking on you, it was almost like he was just going around and chatting with

everybody about whatever there was to chat about. It was almost as though he allowed the situation to present the topic.<sup>81</sup>

It is evident that Richardson created an educational environment that was structured but also open to circumstance and individual children's interests, abilities and imagination. Through explicit and implicit pedagogical techniques and using the students' interest in their personal themes, he guided his students to find a language and process for the evaluation of their work, which led to rising standards as well as the growth of a culture of sincerity and respect.

Echoing Dewey, art educator Henry Schaefer-Simmern suggests that personal relevance and an individual level of conception was necessary for real learning. He states, "[t]he artistic process embodies in an indivisible manner so many different aspects of human functioning" that unless it originates from "the natural growth of abilities it will have little effect on the personality".<sup>82</sup> Moreover, he suggests, what a child learns through conceiving and executing a work, their "visual experience...cannot be replaced by conceptual comprehension". As in Richardson's *In the Early World*, the artwork featured in Schaefer-Simmern's book by students in psychiatric care, and prisoners, provides a striking illustration of the progressive dictum of experiential learning, "[t]here is a great distinction between information about a thing and cognition of a thing: the one can be learned; the other can only be self-experienced."<sup>83</sup> Integrative thematic studies such as David Windust's eel theme or Eric's bull series could only have occurred in a context where ample time was provided for personalised experiential learning.

The correlation between the questions raised by art education and those raised by progressive education was recognised by Dewey. He held that philosophically the position of educators on the nature of artistic activity in children could be seen as an accurate reflection of their position on the nature of the aims and processes of education itself and argued:<sup>84</sup>

There is no inherent difference between fullness of activity and artistic activity; the latter is one with being fully alive. Hence it is not something

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<sup>81</sup> Barbara Spiller (nee Henare), interview, May 23, 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Schaefer-Simmern, *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity: Its Basis, Processes, and Implications*. p. 199.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 199; The preface to Schaefer-Simmern's book, *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity*, 1950, was one of last things Dewey wrote.

<sup>84</sup> Seymour Sarason, B., *Teaching as a Performing Art* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), p. 82.

possessed by a few persons and setting them apart from the rest of mankind, but is the normal or natural human heritage. Its spontaneity is not a gush, but is the naturalness proper to all organised energies of the live creature... Normally and naturally, artistic activity is the way in which one may “gain in the strength and stature, the belief in his own powers, and the self-respect, which make artistic activity constructive in the growth of personality.” It is this fact that distinguishes the demonstrations conducted by Professor Schaefer-Simmern. They take place in a particular field of activity as every form of experimental demonstration must do. But through that field, as well as in it, there is convincing thoroughgoing demonstration that activity which is artistic extends beyond all subjects conventionally named “The Fine Arts.” For it provides the pattern and model of the full and free growth of personality and of full life activity, wherever it occurs...”<sup>85</sup>

It is important to emphasise that Dewey meant ‘activity’ in the sense of an ‘organised experience’ discussed previously, rather than an inchoate sampling.

It is clear that for Richardson, although his model was indisputably a child-centred one, the term ‘progressive’ represented for him an abnegation of his duty to teach and he sought to distance himself from the word and its associations. Like Dewey, Richardson saw artistic ability as synonymous with being fully alive, stating: “Artistic ability and need is I believe a universal attribute of all children (and probably all adults if we only knew it).”<sup>86</sup> In response to the question ‘Can creativity be taught?’ he replied: “The question you ask is astounding really. It means: am I human? It is so much a part of growing. So much, I fear, of formal education denies the process.”<sup>87</sup>

The fact that Richardson rejected educational progressivism while running an experimental school in the midst of an era of unprecedented liberal educational reform raises questions about the role of the individual and the institution in educational reform. These issues are considered in the following chapter in which I examine the question of Richardson’s educational legacy.

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<sup>85</sup> Dewey, Foreword to Henry Schaefer-Simmern, 1948, p. x.

<sup>86</sup> ESR, Per. Com., May 6, 2008.

<sup>87</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 11, 2006.

## Chapter 11: Relating Educational History to the Biography of an Educator

Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time.

– C. Wright Mills<sup>1</sup>

While my historical approach in this study has revealed new understandings about a particular educational development, specifically the transformation of the role of art and craft in schools over the first half of the twentieth century, I have come to realise through my biographical approach that individual experiments in schooling led by innovative educators like Richardson cannot be fully appreciated by locating them only in their historical place. Individual people and their exceptional schooling experiments stand both inside history and in their own biographical spaces. This chapter addresses my deeper understandings of this phenomenon, which emerged as a result of addressing both the significant role of historical developments in the arts and crafts during the fifty years before Richardson began at Oruaiti, while also dignifying the work of Richardson as a successful innovative educator. In the first part of this chapter, I examine historical developments in policy and institutional practices during the years of Oruaiti and the opportunities and constraints they provided for Richardson's successful educational experiment. In the second part of this chapter, I examine Richardson as an innovative educator framed within the context of Oruaiti School.

Considered together and separately, the use of historical and biographical approaches raises two important questions. What is lost when the focus is a singular rather than a dual one? What, for example, would be missing had I focused exclusively on an historical explication of the Oruaiti School experiment relative to developments in philosophy, policy and practices in art education over this time? Conversely, what is gained through addressing both the sweep of historical events across half a century and significant biographical moments in the life of Elwyn Richardson and Oruaiti School? A finding of

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<sup>1</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 226

particular significance that emerged from locating Richardson historically in my research was the powerful role that the arts have played as a catalyst for broad educational reform in the New Zealand primary school from the 1900s to the 1960s. During this period the aims of and ambitions for art education underwent a radical transformation as education officials drew on a range of arguments for its position in the curriculum which were informed by the varying theories of mental discipline, social efficiency, developmental and progressive ideology. At different points in time during this period the arts were conceptualised not just as curricular reforms but as social and pedagogical reforms which would extend the relevance of the school programme, facilitate change in teaching methods and bring about a more organic connection between the various subjects and the daily life of students and their communities.

A significant outcome of the historical approach has been the opportunity to attempt to address the misconception of Elwyn Richardson's work at Oruaiti as being predominantly concerned with art and craft education. Biographical inquiry has instead revealed the principal role that science has played in Richardson's educational philosophy, pedagogy and curriculum. A further important finding has been the profound implications Richardson's early educative experiences were to have for the development of his educational philosophy and pedagogy.

It is important to note that my decision to explore educational and social history relative to Richardson's educational contribution put me at cross purposes with Richardson, who firmly held that he was neither a beneficiary of other educationalists' ideas nor a product of any social or historical context. Not only did he feel that what he was doing was markedly different from his contemporaries, but he also felt that he was protecting his students from the traditional educational practice he saw all around him. He argued he did not share the philosophical views of any other educational luminaries and so, in his view, could not be aligned with any broader movements or philosophy, a position, which he concluded with a degree of relief, would "spoil the story" of my thesis.<sup>2</sup> From Richardson's perspective, my intention to locate him in his social and historical context not only seemed irrelevant, but also misleading because it would involve a process of classification. Like an insect pinned to a spreading board, he feared he would be positioned alongside others who were deemed by some external party to be of the same

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<sup>2</sup> ESR Per. Com., July 8, 2005.

philosophical or educational genus and species. For Richardson, this process of historical association was fundamentally meaningless because in his view it had nothing to do with his own experience. To be so classified was to be ensnared, he felt, in a view summed up by American writer James Baldwin, who observed, “[p]eople are trapped in history and history is trapped in people.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, my commitment to a historical contextualisation of Richardson’s work made him initially a reluctant participant. In my thesis proposal, which I sent to him, I suggested that there were two sets of interrelated questions the answers to which could inform my study of his work at Oruaiti; those connected to the arts and those pertaining to schools that were receptive to the study of arts embedded in progressive educational ideals. Oruaiti School, I held, offered a rich example of the way social forces and individual creativity could combine to produce extraordinary results. For Richardson, the notion of social forces was a chimerical one and he was unconvinced by my rationale for such a conceptualisation of his work. Upon receipt of my proposal he outlined his concerns in a letter to me as follows:

I don’t think that I was the product of any social/cultural divergence and I hope I am never labelled as such. You must preserve my honesty in this matter. Because I am so damn scared of some label I’ll make a small confession: I strongly believe, indeed I know that I was given a gift to teach those particular children in a way which suited and protected them from what was current in education at those times. In exchange I was given insight. I abhorred ‘Education’ reading. The ‘current philosophy’ whatever. Last night I discussed your wish to interview me with Helen. I was initially unhappy about the idea...

Helen thinks I should co-operate with you. She says I should ask for a list of questions so I can, if I wish, speak to significant ideas, and perhaps not others.

I’ve had bad experiences in the past in the interview situation. The all too often outcome has been misinterpreted content and even sometimes the inclusion of ideas which were the interviewer’s content!

An interview implies a conclusion – I will be classified according to some educational philosophy and person! In fact I am my own person with my own vision, something which did not exist elsewhere. Of course there were experiments in USA & England but their findings whatever, had nothing to do with my pupils and me.

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<sup>3</sup> James Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village”, in *Notes of a Native Son* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964), p. 81



I had thought that Oruaiti would be judged on the basis of past pupils' retrospective memories, my many publications and what I have said. Not on interviews.

Because I have no philosophical links, I believe that I cannot be branded as a follower of this or that educational philosopher. My stand would spoil your story. Nor am I the product of some 'cultural need' or 'expression' of 'God's own country', the Depression or some sort of rebellion. I am my own person, one who had a personal sense of being a creative resident of this world (see my story about Wal and of 'discovering air').<sup>4</sup>

It was clear at the outset that Richardson was not interested in being interviewed for my dissertation and believed he had nothing to offer that would contribute to my study of his work. For him, the past was unimportant – other educationalists' ideas were simply a distraction from the important task of working out his own pedagogy at Oruaiti School. While over time we developed a rapport, which saw Richardson become a keen participant in my research and write well over one hundred letters to me on his experience in education, he continued to view my commitment to a historical contextualisation of his work with a mixture of apprehension and scepticism. The tension that arose out of this intersection between history and biography in my research gave rise to questions which would not have emerged had I elected to do a case study of Richardson's work at Oruaiti School in isolation. While our different perspectives underscored what seemed to be incommensurable differences they ultimately resulted in understandings and insights which I could not have reached otherwise. This chapter offers an opportunity to examine in more detail the tensions and ambiguities that emerged as a result of approaching my research in this way. I have selected three of these points for further discussion.

As I progressed in my research, I found that my growing historical knowledge usefully informed the biographical questions I asked Richardson, but I also discovered that there was a significant disjuncture between our understandings about the history of this period. For instance, my historical examination of the development of art and craft education and the growth of progressive ideas about education in New Zealand in the first half of the twentieth century suggested that Richardson was working in a context that was clearly receptive to, and supportive of, experimentation in creative education. The protection he received from conservative inspectors through Beeby, the vast resources he was given –

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<sup>4</sup> ESR., Per. Com, July 8, 2005.

both in the form of materials and professional support, and the government-funded publication of his book tell a story of a system that encouraged educational innovation, particularly in the arts and crafts.

But Richardson's own experience was largely one of antipathy towards the official education system. His books are laced with barbed references to educational bureaucrats ('little grey men') and he frequently recounts the bungling interference of inspectors and the lack of support he received from the educational establishment and his peers. The Department of Education's failure at the end of the Oruaiti experiment to deliver on Beeby's vague promise of 'some sort of academic recognition' for Richardson and the lack of acknowledgement for the families who participated in the experiment left him embittered and disillusioned. His personal account then jarred on several counts with my historical findings and raised a number of new questions and ambiguities: were there certain characteristics of the institutional reforms and the New Zealand educational setting which worked to constrain innovation? Was ours a system in which innovation was only tolerated in single starbursts, – in extraordinary educational experiments, which, as Herbert Read suggested, tended not to go any further?<sup>5</sup> Were Richardson's narrative of isolation and his anti-establishment stance simply part of his rebellion, or was it the product of his early educative experiences where real learning, like his discovery of air, was something he worked out for himself largely independently of adults and institutions? I address these questions in the first part of this chapter relative to Richardson's institutional location.

Secondly, as I researched Richardson's professional biography I was puzzled by his apprehension about being located historically which struck me as at odds with his scientific background, particularly his own personal passion for palaeontology. While his scientific background imbued both his pedagogy and practice, it seemed markedly absent when it came to the question of his own professional identity. I knew that as a malacologist Richardson was keenly aware of the purpose and value of taxonomic rank and the way in which knowledge of the genus, family and class of an individual species enhanced an understanding and appreciation of both its general and distinctive characteristics. In addition, I saw that in his own writings in scientific journals Richardson readily followed convention in providing a detailed report on the location, surroundings

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<sup>5</sup> See introductory chapter, p. 12.

and substrata in which he had discovered a particular fossil. How then as a scientist when asked to consider his own place in time could he so coolly dismiss context as superfluous to deeper understanding? Was his disinclination for being located in history – and the tacit acknowledgement this implied of his liberal ideological forbears – rooted in a certain professional insecurity, a fear that others would receive credit for his ideas? Was there, as Tovey seemed to suggest, a certain professional jealousy driving his insistence on separateness?<sup>6</sup> Or rather did it stem from the solitary experience of working out his educational philosophy for himself as a teacher? Did Richardson suffer from what Harold Bloom termed ‘an anxiety of influence’ – a fear that if he immersed himself in the theory and philosophy of education he would become, as Oscar Wilde also feared, “an echo of someone else’s music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him.”<sup>7</sup> I wondered if there was something about the highly personal and creative nature of developing his own educational pedagogy that demanded a kind of intelligent asceticism – a drive for simplicity which was also evident in his desire for geographical and professional isolation and a desire to experiment? I examine these questions and my concomitant search for a professional designation in relation to locating Richardson historically.

Finally, paradoxically, I was surprised to discover through writing that although my entry into Richardson’s work had been through his remarkable book *In the Early World*, written language was not, in fact, his métier. As I sought to understand Richardson’s educational philosophy, I found that he struggled to put his educational ideas into words, and, because he “abhorred the language of education”, he often turned to poetry or story in response to my inquiries.<sup>8</sup> It was not that he was unwilling to answer my questions about his educational philosophy directly; to the contrary, he was a generous and thoughtful correspondent, but there seemed to be a curious mismatch between my questions and his answers. I had hoped that he would be able to speak directly to the questions left unanswered in his book *In the Early World*, which he described as a ‘howdunnit’. I wanted to move beyond his description of how he did what he did at Oruaiti, to why he approached teaching and learning as he did. I wanted to know what shaped and informed his thinking about education, where he found his inspiration and upon what he based his belief that the arts offered a gateway to learning in all subjects.

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<sup>6</sup> ESR Per. Com. November 30, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). p. 6

<sup>8</sup> ESR, Per. Com., August 23, 2007.

As my questions concerning his philosophy were answered again and again with rich descriptions of processes and artefacts, I began to realise that his struggle to engage with my questions was not because he found educational theory impenetrable, nor because he was anti-intellectual, but because a theoretical route was not the doorway through which he entered the classroom. I came to see Richardson's radical empiricism as like William James' pragmatist doctrine that "the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience".<sup>9</sup> For Richardson, entry into the domain of teaching and knowledge could only be through practice and his own experience. Accordingly, his detailed descriptions of processes, activities and artefacts were, in his view, the best evidence of his educational philosophy and he would not engage in intellectual discussions beyond this point. He had little time for the conventional culture of education as we know it.

From a research perspective this unexpected challenge threw into relief questions which might have otherwise remained invisible: to what extent should we expect a teacher, or an artist, to be able to talk in philosophical terms about his work or to know what has shaped his views and where those influences originated? What was the nature of the problem we were having with language? Is the language of education in some way incommensurable with the language of art? I examine these questions in the third part of this chapter in relation to the publication of *In the Early World*.

### ***Locating Richardson Institutionally: Richardson and the Department of Education***

It is precisely because the historical institutional context was one that was hospitable to innovation in creative education that Richardson's generally negative comments about the Department of Education of his day and his experience of doing something different in New Zealand education seem worthy of closer examination. Kaur et al. suggest that educational policies are by their very nature "blunt instruments". It is not until they are enacted within particular locations, "that the blunt instrument becomes refined enough to give a precise effect on the lives of individuals".<sup>10</sup> If we accept that the relationship of policy to practice is by its very nature uneven in character, then it becomes overly

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<sup>9</sup> William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), p. xii-xiii

<sup>10</sup> Kaur et al., "Searching for Equity and Social Justice: Diverse Learners in Aotearoa New Zealand," p. 247.

simplistic to dismiss Richardson's generally negative comments about his interactions with the Department of Education of his day as some sort of necessary anti-establishment stance that was conducive to rebellion.<sup>11</sup> The tension between policy and practice that is thrown into relief through the intersection of history with biography creates an opportunity to better understand both the system and the individual. What more do these tensions reveal about the nature of educational reform in the New Zealand context? What more do they reveal about Richardson? To examine these questions, is to explore the local and the particular – the experience of one radical New Zealand educationalist and the space the New Zealand educational establishment provided for him in which to do something different. Implicit in this, is the broader question, posed by Britzman, "how does education live in people and how do people live in education?"<sup>12</sup>

### **Windows of Opportunity**

It has been suggested that both Richardson and his contemporary, educationalist Sylvia Ashton Warner, found in their anti-establishment stance, a sense of isolation that was essential to their innovative work in education, and that their 'narcissistic' claims of alienation were in contrast to the reality.<sup>13</sup> Although there may be a degree of truth in this, an assessment of policy presents only a surface layer of the educational landscape. For as we have seen in the years which preceded Richardson and Ashton Warner, despite the exhortations of the more progressively inclined education officials who cited Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi and Dewey in their annual reports and urged teachers to discover the individual child, there were inspectors who remained committed to a fusty and formalist curriculum and who graded accordingly. Similarly, the breezy progressivism propounded in the 1929 syllabus was quarantined by the continued existence of the Proficiency Examination, which precluded any significant change until its abolition in 1937. Likewise, even though the theoretical foundations and ideological basis of the development of art and craft in schools in the 1950s and 1960s were carefully formulated in the 1945 tentative art scheme, in practice, many principals remained hostile to the visits of art and craft advisors and to what they saw as an intrusion into the core subjects of reading, writing and

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<sup>11</sup> See: Kelvin Smythe, "Elwyn Richardson: Lessons to Be Learned (10)," Smythe, Kelvin, <http://www.networkonnet.co.nz>; Sue Middleton, "I My Own Professor: Ashton-Warner Writes Theory 1940-1960," in *Australian Association for Research in Education* (Hyatt Hotel, Auckland 2003); Lawrence Jones, *Barbed Wire & Mirrors: Essays on New Zealand Prose*, Te Whenua Series No. 3. (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1990), p. 331.

<sup>12</sup> Deborah P. Britzman, *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects: Toward a Psychoanalytic Inquiry of Learning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1952), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> See note 11 above.

arithmetic. Indeed, an examination of the development of these reforms seems to suggest that the translation from policy into practice is contingent on the vagaries of influential individuals such as Hogben, Riley, La Trobe, Beeby, Blumhardt, Tovey, Richardson and their particular nexus in place and time.

Clearly there is always a disjuncture between what is in the minds and mouths of the education administrators and the reality in classroom practice. Although the character of the system under Beeby's administration was sympathetic to innovation and experimentation, he was aware that "neither a new syllabus nor freedom from official restraint was sufficient in itself to induce average teachers to make radical changes in their methods of instruction."<sup>14</sup> It was essential, he believed, for education committees to feel that they were "working in a system where change was expected – was in the very air".<sup>15</sup> His aim was to "make teachers feel that the department expected change of them, that it had a clear idea of the general direction the changes should take, that it would condone honest failures and their successes would be of value to the committees working on the new curricula".<sup>16</sup> In a letter to Professor Robert J. Havighurst at the University of Chicago, in April 1959, Beeby explained:

I have been trying to bring about certain changes in the NZ school system, and I am beginning to find my ideas about more primitive systems of immense help. Even in a tolerably modern system such as ours in 1959, there are teaching practices that, historically speaking, span half a century, and what I, or anyone else working from the centre, can do is strictly limited by the training and the general education of the teaching profession. If we move too slowly, the progressives lose heart and either leave the service or lapse into routine; if we press on too fast, the laggards rebel, or, worse still, try to adopt modern practices they don't understand. Every education system, however modern, has one foot in one "stage" and the other in a stage decades earlier. It is all part of the central problem of the educational administrator, to universalise good modern practice that he finds in any one spot."<sup>17</sup>

Beeby's consummate skill as an administrator was his ability to navigate the inevitable resistance to change through modifying the structure of the system while simultaneously finding ways to change teachers' thinking. As an educational rebel, Richardson did not

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<sup>14</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 140.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> C. E. Beeby letter to Robert J. Havighurst at the University of Chicago, April 21, 1959, (Alexander Turnbull Library, MS papers - 485-3).

need help to modernise his methods. However, his success was largely possible because of Beeby's liberal stance on educational experimentation and the thoughtful interventions he designed at an administrative level to facilitate this. One of the most noteworthy of these was Beeby's creation of the specialist subject advisor, which addressed the central problem of universalising good practice on three fronts simultaneously. Specialist advisors disrupted and modified the traditional curriculum by introducing new skills, activities and approaches into classrooms. Teacher training was offered through regular Department of Education in-service courses in art and craft and art advisors were available to provide one-on-one help for individual teachers as required.

It is important to note that the very identity of the specialists as expert practitioners set them apart from the school inspectors upon whom teachers depended for their grading. As a result, they often fulfilled a genuine mentoring role, for isolated teachers in particular, and as Beeby anticipated, they were influential in changing and supporting teachers' thinking and practice.

On another front, the regular exhibitions of children's artwork organised by art specialists in community centres and school halls throughout the 1950s and 1960s were hugely popular with the general public.<sup>18</sup> Merv Holland describes the roles art specialists and organisers played at the children's art exhibitions as akin to public relations officers: they talked to parents, local reporters and the general public and set up displays and questions for the viewers to consider alongside the children's art works. As a pedagogical strategy, the exhibitions were particularly successful because advisors were able to visibly demonstrate to visitors the qualitative difference between the 'new art' methods and those they remembered from their own stultifying lessons as children. As well as promoting the idea of learning through the arts, the exhibitions established a new and less rarefied climate of art appreciation and broadened the general public conception and appreciation of art. This in turn led to the rise of private dealer galleries as opposed to public art galleries. These were run by curators who were keen to promote the new wave of developing artists, some of whom were working under the auspices of the Art and Craft Branch.

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<sup>18</sup> In 1949 an Auckland exhibition of children's art and craft work drew a crowd of 22,000 people over the space of three weeks.

In summary, while Beeby acknowledged the inherent limitations of centralised institutional reform, his reforms expressed a devolutionary architecture expressly aimed at mitigating this. Far from being a ‘top down’ approach towards initiating educational change, teacher training, resource allocation and community involvement were integral to his efforts to modify the system and to create an institutional climate which encouraged teachers inclined like Richardson to “break new ground”.<sup>19</sup>

### **Richardson and the Department of Education: Contestations**

The opportunities provided to Richardson in his institutional context have been outlined above. To examine the constraints he experienced in more detail is not to catalogue perceived hurts or sensationalise transgressions, but to examine what these reveal both about the relationship between Richardson and his institution, and the limitations of the reforms in art and craft education at that time.

Richardson’s greatest source of disappointment with the Department of Education seemed to lie in the fact that it failed to honour Beeby’s promise of academic recognition for him or to formally thank the families for their support in the Oruaiti experiment. In spite of Richardson’s frequent reference in his writings to ‘little grey men,’ his relationship with the inspectors was generally collegial. As discussed in chapter eight, inspectors’ reports filed in 1949, 1953, 1956 and 1959 commend his teaching performance, curriculum coverage and the general ‘tone’ of his school. He himself felt that in the main the inspectors respected him as a teacher:

Their trouble was that they really didn’t fully understand. They’d never seen creativity abounding before...I’m sure I was an embarrassment to their neat philosophies. Still I met some really fine blokes...I got wonderful reports from most. I attacked the little grey men about literary and artistic values and explained that no truths were spoken of such crap. For it was crap that they sought! (I had lovely rows with my grey men about values!).<sup>20</sup>

The fact that he was able to engage in robust discussions about values with inspectors suggests a relationship that was in most cases predicated on some degree of esteem and

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<sup>19</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup> ESR Per. Com., December 30, 2005; February 20, 2006; July 15, 2008.



mutual respect. However, Richardson's decision to write a book was of concern to the inspectors:<sup>21</sup>

...My Oruaiti curriculum remained in my head. I kept my dream alive ...I was writing *In the Early World*, that threw them! All sorts of difficult questions arose. Who for? Why? What was I saying? And difficulties: the senior Inspector will have to pass it – we shall expect a copy, et alia! I showed some of it to an inspector who wanted to take it away – I could not allow that. He tried to 'force' me to hand it over – 'It was Departmental property,' he said. The man went away without it.<sup>22</sup>

While most inspectors may have been sympathetic to or possibly even intimidated by Richardson's radical approach to teaching and learning, the fact that the significance of his work was at this time constrained by his small roll and remote location should not be overlooked. Unlike progressive schools in large cities, which are often attached to universities and cater to the well to do children of politicians and academics, the Oruaiti students were predominantly the children of Exclusive Brethren and Maori farmers. In the inspectors' view therefore, irrespective of whether the experiment succeeded or failed, its isolation seemed to guarantee it would do so relatively quietly. For Richardson to publish a book was, however, a different matter. A book would afford Richardson a reach beyond the intimacy of his classroom and could disrupt conventional practices.

It is not clear exactly what sort of academic recognition Beeby promised Richardson, and nothing appears to have been formally written down by Beeby in relation to this issue. In fact, Richardson himself seems somewhat unclear, saying variously in correspondence, interviews and his published books, that it was a doctorate or the assurance of leave to finish his undergraduate degree.<sup>23</sup> In three different excerpts from personal correspondence, Richardson recalls Beeby's terms as follows:

At the end of the day [his visit to Oruaiti] he said, "You want to experiment, you want the protection and you want some reward for what you are doing at the end of it? Yes, I'll make some terms. If there's a mess, you clean it up. At the end, you stay on and clean it up if some of your peers say that you have made a mess. Two, that you write a report at the end of it. Three, we will give you a degree if you do write a proper report on it." He meant a doctorate, I never got it. I'm getting it now in five weeks time [an Honorary Doctorate from Massey University]. And

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., March 7, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 7, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Richardson, 2004, p. 15.

he said as long as you send me some of their lovely poetry that they are writing regularly and some of their prints. I won't write back, I'll just be very grateful to have them and I'll take them with me when I go overseas. For the rest of his career, while he was director, he got my stuff regularly though I never saw him again.<sup>24</sup>

I had been promised a doctorate if I stayed at Oruaiti and completed the study into creativity. I followed my 'contract' but received no word. I became very bitter indeed! All those in power left or died, and I had to 'make it' again!"<sup>25</sup>

One of the parts of the contract was, if I wrote a report I would get a year off to go back to university to finish my degree, which I didn't. I never did. I wrote to the Department and asked for that year off and they said nothing. They didn't even bother using a stamp to tell me that I wasn't going to get anything. The Department were absolutely terrible to me. They gave me no satisfaction at all... I also asked if the Department would give the parents who had cooperated with me over all these years, even a cardboard print saying "thank you, you have been a good parent" thing ... even just a letter of thanks for cooperating and helping in this important experiment. I got no reply, so no family was ever thanked except from me, I had to carry the total load of responsibility. I had to do the lot."<sup>26</sup>

Richardson's failure to complete his undergraduate degree when he was in his twenties undoubtedly compounded his disillusionment regarding the lack of academic recognition for his work at Oruaiti. His unsuccessful application for aegrotat consideration in his final year of his BSc at Auckland University, following the divorce of his parents, was, he says, "a terrible shock of another sort".<sup>27</sup> Of the University's refusal to grant compassionate consideration he says, he has "hurt ever since. There was no way that I could go back to uni in that or any year. I was really abandoned."<sup>28</sup> With Beeby's departure to Paris, a significant falling out with Tovey in the last few years of the experiment and with no official support to undertake further study, Richardson felt as if he had to begin over again professionally, a dismal prospect after the heights he had reached with his students at Oruaiti.

It should be noted that to award a doctorate was not within Beeby's powers as Director. The most he could have done would have been to recommend this to a university. The fact

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<sup>24</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 7, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., November 1, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, ESR, March, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> ESR, Per. Com., August 21, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., November 14, 2007.

that Richardson did not hear back from the Department was highly unusual as education officials were generally punctilious public servants. Additionally, Richardson was not employed by the Department of Education and anyone applying to the Department for leave would have been advised to apply to the education board that employed them. It seems likely therefore that Richardson is referring to the board in this instance rather than the Department of Education.

### **Richardson and the Art and Craft Branch**

Although in the broadest sense Richardson was protected from the top both in terms of the educational administration of his day and the permission he received to experiment, on a local level, the intimate scale of the New Zealand educational landscape served to amplify ideological differences and exacerbate personal tensions in ways that negatively impacted both the individuals involved and the momentum of the reforms. In the following discussion, I briefly examine Richardson's institutional location in regard to his complex relationship with the Art and Craft Branch of the Department of Education.

Noted for his pragmatic management style, Beeby gained a reputation for his practice of choosing the person he felt was best equipped for a job regardless of their seniority in a given field.<sup>29</sup> Another feature of his approach was to allow staff to develop the job in their own style without clear guidelines.<sup>30</sup> Although the brief for the reforms in art and craft in the 1940s and 1950s was modelled directly on Smithell's successful reorganization of the national physical education program, there was no written departmental policy.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the working of the Art and Craft Branch was from the outset largely contingent on the vision, charisma and drive of a single man, Gordon Tovey.

As a leader, Tovey was proactive. He regularly visited schools, engaged genuinely with students, mentored young teachers and took a personal interest in the lives of his team of

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<sup>29</sup> Alcorn, 1999, p. 116. It is also worth noting that Beeby's own career followed a similar pattern. He was the first Director since the Rev. William James Habens (1839-1899), who became Inspector-General of Schools in 1877, not to have been a teacher and inspector of schools. Beeby was also the first twentieth-century Director not to have risen from the ranks of teacher, inspector, senior official in head office. He was recommended to Fraser as a potential Director by Dr. Ernst Gideon Malherbe the Director of the South African National Bureau of Education, who attended the New Zealand New Education Fellowship Conference in 1937. This may have had a bearing on Beeby's own management strategy.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Henderson, C., 1998, p. 218.

art specialists, becoming something of a father figure to a number.<sup>32</sup> Although the number of art and craft advisors in New Zealand during this period was impressive relative to the number of schools, there were only 131 students training as art specialists from 1949 to 1960 – an intake of about twelve students a year.<sup>33</sup> During this time, it was common for staff from the Art and Craft head office as well as itinerant art specialists to lodge with teachers when they visited schools and in many isolated rural areas there was no other option. Geographical isolation meant that professional relationships often blended into social and personal ones as generalist teachers, art specialists and staff from the head office met at refresher courses, in classrooms, in private homes, on the marae, on the rugby field and in the pub. As a consequence, details about private lives often became public and spilled over into professional relationships creating tensions and subtexts that simmered under the surface exacerbating philosophical differences.

Although Tovey and Richardson agreed on the importance of creativity in education, they typically disagreed on some particulars. While their different views on specific aspects of child art have been explored in previous chapters, a further significant point of difference and one that served as a catalyst for a personal and professional rift, was their individual orientations towards education for Maori students, a divergence that was brought to the fore by Richardson's attempts to distance himself from Tovey's Northern Maori Project. In brief, Richardson's chief criticisms of the project were that it was led and inspired by Pakeha, rather than Maori and that it overemphasised the affective at the expense of the intellectual. He believed that dance and rhythm, which were "at the heart of Gordon's philosophy", were not necessarily the only subjects that could be used for the basis of activity and that other activities could be as useful. He openly expressed these views at a meeting of the Northern Maori Project Schools in 1956.<sup>34</sup> Richardson was also sceptical of Tovey's theory of racial memory and his belief that by "tapping into racial memory...one can key into the personal inherited rhythm of each kind of person, and sometimes each race of person, unlocking their powers to learn". "Each brain", Tovey believed, "is enormously complex and much under-employed, and unless teachers use the right call-signs for these many kinds of individual patterns, the potential is under-used or the power becomes destructive".<sup>35</sup> Tovey held that these racial memories were expressed, for

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.138.

<sup>33</sup> Collinge, 1978, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> Henderson, C., 1998, p. 133.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 203; Richardson, 1979, p. 19.

example, in the children's pottery making at Oruaiti, a view Richardson had reservations about.<sup>36</sup>

Because many of the children at Oruaiti could claim some Maori ancestry, a primary aim for Richardson from the outset was to find a form of education that worked for Maori. However, because he was principally concerned with fostering the individuality of every student, he did not see any need to draw attention in his writings to the fact that a particular student was Maori.<sup>37</sup> In practice, Richardson fostered the kind of bicultural classroom that has only become valued in recent years; he frequently used te reo in his interactions with his students and explored Maori history, language and art through myth and legend. He regularly invited Maori elders to talk to the students, and encouraged those who were natural leaders in their communities to assume these roles within the school. Far from being uninterested in the question of education for Maori, at an institutional level, Richardson was considered to be ahead of his times.

The issue of education for Maori also arose in relation to the publication of the U.S. edition of *In the Early World*. While Verne Moberg, production editor for Pantheon, clearly respected Richardson's inclusive approach towards Maori, she believed that further sociological explanation of the subject was necessary for American readers. In NZCER director John Watson's view, Richardson's disinclination to distinguish between his Maori and Pakeha students in the book was exemplary and he was strongly opposed to Moberg's request for additional background information from Richardson on the "school's milieu" and "New Zealand's social structure" if it meant singling out Maori students. He wrote to Moberg:

...We greatly welcomed his earlier wish not to single out the Maori children for special mention in this book but to simply show that in this school their work was indistinguishable from other children. In view of the very pervasive assumption here that all Maori children suffer from language difficulties with English we felt it would be salutary to have this shown without a lot of explanation. At international seminars in the USA I have found the book [*In the Early World*, 1964, NZ edition] most useful as a means of questioning such assumptions about Spanish-

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 24, 2007.

American, Filipino and Negro children, and I've not really been asked to explain the circumstances of rural and urban Maori children etc.<sup>38</sup>

Richardson's differences with Tovey on the question were essentially philosophical, but were also shaped by their very different briefs. As a principal and teacher, Richardson was working with one school and its community. Tovey, in contrast, was working on multiple fronts on a national scale, not only to foster the development of art and craft in schools but also to make a place for Maoritanga in the primary school curriculum, as well as to provide support for Maori artists and teachers who were working in a system which was, as one specialist said, predominantly "geared to monocultural education".<sup>39</sup> The book, *The Arts of the Maori*, prepared by Tovey and published by the Department of Education in 1961 remains an important product of this broad initiative.

In the last few years of the Oruaiti experiment, simmering tensions between Tovey and Richardson over the Northern Maori Project came to a head. As a result of their divide Richardson lost the friendship of a man whom he admired and regarded as "an inspired giant in his day".<sup>40</sup> He also found himself cut off from his usual access to art materials, frequently obtained through correspondence directly with Tovey or Esther Archdall, a senior associate in the Art and Craft Branch head office.

It is in this context that his embittered dedication for the Pantheon edition of *In the Early World* needs to be understood. Instead of, "To the children of Oruaiti, who made this work possible; and to their parents, who accepted my methods and discoveries as the normal way of educational growth," (the dedication in the 1964 NZCER edition), he requested: "This book is dedicated to the little grey bastards of the department without whose meddling and pimping ways this work would never have been started."<sup>41</sup> Significantly, his request provoked John Watson, Director of NZCER, to remind Richardson of his status as the beneficiary of a uniquely liberal educational establishment:

I feel that the bit about the school inspectors simply cheapens your achievement and doesn't help the mood of the book. It is not for me to quarrel about your views of the establishment but if you publish these it will be very easy for anyone to demonstrate that perhaps you are really a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., April 1, 1969.

<sup>39</sup> Henderson, 1998, p.138.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., February 3, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> ESR letter to J. Watson, March 5, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* USA, 1968-70.

cantankerous artist-teacher. Later this year a book will appear in the US based upon a careful inquiry into the views of teachers in Australia, New Zealand, Britain and the USA – 2500 in each country, very properly sampled by a team at the University of Missouri. This material shows in very convincing terms that New Zealand teachers are much less tense about their administrators than their colleagues in other English-speaking countries, that they cooperate with them on a great many matters of importance, and also that they have much greater freedom to teach as they want to. And anyone familiar with the community pressures on American teachers or public service pressures on Australian teachers knows that it would have been impossible for you to have found an Oruaiti there. But this comment does not mean that I do not appreciate the irritations for you of working in an educational bureaucracy. It is simply that I don't think you should allow these to besmirch your outstanding work. It is a work of art – keep it out of the mud.<sup>42</sup>

In his subsequent correspondence with Verne Moberg, regarding the Pantheon edition of *In the Early World*, Watson goes a step further stating:

Later this year we will publish a history of Teaching and Learning in New Zealand which will indicate that the leaders of the 'system' have been exhorting teachers to do what Mr Richardson aspires to do for three-quarters of a century!<sup>43</sup>

On the same day, in a letter to Richardson addressing the difficulties he was experiencing writing a new introduction for the book solicited by Moberg, Watson is more mild, but makes the same critical point:

Don't worry about the philosophical stuff. You've put ideas with a long and honourable history (even in our own official system) into practice and that is a much more important achievement.<sup>44</sup>

It is unlikely that Watson was alone in his view of the Oruaiti experiment as the culmination of decades of progressive educational reform spanning from Hogben to Beeby. A historical reading of this period would certainly affirm this view – and yet the question remains, how to reconcile this with Richardson's personal experience, in which,

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<sup>42</sup> J. Watson letter to ESR, March 12, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* - USA, 1968-70.

<sup>43</sup> J. Watson letter to V. Moberg, April 1, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* - USA, 1968-70. The book Watson refers to is possibly John L Ewing's *The Development of the New Zealand Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970*, NZCER, 1970.

<sup>44</sup> J. Watson letter to E.S.R, April 1, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* - USA, 1968-70.

far from being the poster boy for a liberal educational establishment, he felt himself an outcast.

On a wider level, beyond the divide that developed between Richardson and Tovey, the range of varying interpretations and approaches being used by both art specialists and generalist teachers to develop art and craft in schools had begun to cause tension within the team of staff working in head office. One of the central challenges for art specialists in the mid 1950s was to find ways of engaging teachers who were not interested in the new methods.<sup>45</sup> As well as the problem of how to bring uninterested teachers up to speed, there remained the critical question of the amount of instruction that should be given by teachers. While Tovey was committed to ‘inspiring’ and ‘motivating’ from an intuitive basis, many staff believed that no matter how subterranean, good teaching occurred in all successful art programs. The tensions caused by these ideological differences were taken personally by Tovey and seriously affected the work of the close-knit team. Matters came to a head at a conference in Hamilton in 1958 where Tovey suffered a breakdown.<sup>46</sup> Staff suggested that he take a year off and Tovey was asked to explain himself to the Assistant Director of Education, Arnold Campbell and to John Ewing, Chief Inspector of Primary Schools.<sup>47</sup> Most of the senior staff in the head office subsequently left.<sup>48</sup> Henderson, who discusses the issues in some depth in her biography of Tovey, states that the whole affair was “undoubtedly one of acute embarrassment to the senior management of the Department of Education who did their best to smooth things over”.<sup>49</sup> Art specialist Stan Jenkins offers a useful perspective on the incident:

Gordon made a tremendous contribution towards a more enlightened type of art education but underlying his capacity to inspire younger art teachers were the strong emotional bonds he formed with them. When, as was inevitable, they showed some measure of independence, he reacted so negatively that the whole basis of his relationships with them revealed its undesirable aspect.<sup>50</sup>

The publication of *In the Early World* further strained Richardson’s relationship with Tovey and some staff within the Art and Craft Branch. Richardson’s lack of

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<sup>45</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 154.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 148-51.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>48</sup> Dick Seely went to work with Jim Coe at Wellington Polytechnic, Dawn Percy and John Ritchie left to work in Auckland and Merv Holland received a transfer becoming district organiser for Hawkes Bay primary and post primary.

<sup>49</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 159.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 161.



acknowledgement in the book for the help he had received from the Department of Education reportedly hurt Tovey who made his feelings widely known.<sup>51</sup> Tovey was also mystified as to why NZCER had not insisted that some statement be made in the book to this effect and felt this to be a double blow. Henderson suggests that Tovey saw Richardson's book as part of his dream "to gain wider acceptance of the work achieved, not just in one isolated school but through the whole group of children, parents and teachers involved in the Northern Maori Project – and of possibly effecting change on a national basis".<sup>52</sup> Richardson, in contrast, who had begun writing for Beeby on the experiment some years before he met Tovey, did not feel that he owed anyone special thanks for the success of his program. In his view, the strength of the work came from the children and the community, and although he does mention assistance from Jim Allen and Dick Seelye, it was to his students and their families that he dedicated the book. Richardson's subsequent book, *The Growth of an Idea*, published in 1979 does, however, go into some detail about the "the part played in the experiment by Gordon Tovey" and the valued support he received from individuals within the Art and Craft Branch.

Tovey's disappointment with *In the Early World* was compounded by the decision of the Department of Education not to publish his book, *The Arts of New Zealand Children*, originally titled *The Arts of the Pakeha*, which was written as a counterpart to *The Arts of the Maori* which was published by the Department in 1961. With Beeby's departure to Paris and a change in government from Labour to National in 1960, led by Keith Holyoake, the political climate shifted perceptibly to the right and there was a distinct loss of enthusiasm for the liberal reforms initiated in the previous decade. Some within the Department of Education felt that the results of the Northern Maori Project were not being carried through to other schools, while others felt that the type of education promoted by Tovey was simply not practical in schools other than isolated, sole-charge schools such as the Project schools and Oruaiti.<sup>53</sup>

Although Tovey remained in the head office until his retirement in 1966, Murray Gilbert took over most of his responsibilities from 1959.<sup>54</sup> In 1964, the Art and Craft Branch was reorganised and became an Advisory Service. Under this system instead of routinely

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 204-205.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>53</sup> Interview, Merv Holland, November 24, 2005; Also Henderson, 1998, p. 216.

<sup>54</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 160.

offering demonstration lessons in schools, advisors provided resources and in-service training workshops for groups of teachers. Over the following years Tovey continued to actively encourage art and craft initiatives, one of the most significant being the course on traditional Maori arts and crafts at Ruatoria in 1960.<sup>55</sup> Tovey was eager that his successor should be someone who was removed from the conflicts that had fractured the original team in the head office and nominated art specialist Bill Barrett as his replacement. Tovey's endorsement was successful and Barrett assumed the position in 1966.

In 1975, the Department of Education disestablished the position of specialist subject supervisors altogether. Specialist supervisors were replaced by Curriculum Officers who worked within a Curriculum Development Unit. In contrast to the position held by Tovey, the Curriculum Officer for Art had no specific responsibility for the Advisory Service beyond providing professional leadership in the curriculum field.<sup>56</sup> By 1989, when the Department of Education was replaced by a Ministry, the art advisory service had dwindled from a peak of about eighty specialists to ten.<sup>57</sup> Roger Hardie discusses the impact of these and subsequent changes on the administration and the quality of art education in his archival book on the Art and Craft Branch, *"The buds of flowering": an archive list for Department of Education Art and Crafts specialist staff 1938-1989*. He reports that by 2005 the Art Advisory Service had few permanent positions and fluctuating numbers of temporary and part-time positions. The result of this, he states, has been a tendency "to produce practices which are superficial 'quick fixes', lacking a solid and enduring philosophical base, but certainly having a wealth of data documenting 'achievement'".<sup>58</sup>

### ***The Rhodes Phenomenon***

After leaving Oruaiti School in 1961 and lecturing for one year in English at Auckland Teachers' College, Richardson won the position of principal of Hay Park School, where he stayed from 1963-65. It was at this school that his three copies of *In the Early World* were delivered to his office, an event that he recalls left him with tears running down his

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<sup>55</sup> Greenwood, J. & Wilson, A. M., record an initiative that grew out of this broad movement: Te Mauri Pakeaka was an innovative education program that provided settings in which Maori and Pakeha could learn about Maori arts and culture in the 1970s and 1980s. See: Janinka Greenwood and Arnold Manaaki Wilson, *Te Mauri Pakeaka: A Journey into the Third Space* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Hardie, 2005, pp. 8-9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

cheeks.<sup>59</sup> Although he was once again working within ‘the system’, the book’s acclaim gave him the sense that he was at last “established with armour plating against the inspectors”.<sup>60</sup> Its success encouraged him to apply for the principalship of a much larger school, Lincoln Heights, where he would work from 1966 to 1969 and again, upon his return from the United States, from 1972 to 1987.

By the late 1960s, however, as the first glow of the superlative reviews of *In the Early World* faded, Richardson felt that as well as ruffling feathers in some of the higher echelons of the Department of Education, on a local level, his book had somehow driven a wedge between him and the bulk of his peers. He explains:

I was not, I think, the flavour of those years! Indeed, some even seemed frightened of me and my philosophy. Some hated me and said disparaging things... Teachers tend, I think, to be somewhat threatened by anything new. Is it because they are already expounding on all that they can manage and that they can’t entertain a change? ... Yes, it *In the Early World* sidelined me. I thought, indeed I knew why. Teachers and especially heads, saw it as a challenge about an area of education that they had no knowledge nor feeling about! They had no conversation for it, or me! ... I left the Headmasters Association over it, but not openly.<sup>61</sup>

It was, he felt “a lonely philosophy”.<sup>62</sup> Aside from a few close colleagues, Jim Allen, Peter Smith, Stan Boyle, Barry Brickell, Bruce Hammond, Bill Guild and John Cunningham, he believed there were “few who fathomed his ideas”.<sup>63</sup> His feelings of isolation were compounded by the fact that when he returned to New Zealand in 1971 after three years as a visiting lecturer at five different American Universities, he found that there was little interest in his work or in what he had discovered:

No one approached me about my work in USA. Although I did address a Principals’ conference on two occasions. I think I was looked upon as a strange philosophical sort of fellow who could be ignored. ITEW kind of upset them, but it, too, could be put on the shelf.<sup>64</sup>

Richardson’s experience of coming back from abroad brimming with new ideas only to meet a deafening silence was not an uncommon experience for New Zealanders at this

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<sup>59</sup> ESR Per. Com., March 4, 2008.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> ESR, Per. Com., June 11, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., December 7, 2006.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., January 28, 2007.

time. Others within the Art and Craft Branch had similar experiences. Holland, who entered his third year of teacher training at 24 years of age having been an officer with the New Zealand armed forces, found himself older and significantly more well read than his classmates who had come directly from their second year at teachers college. He noticed a similar bias:

I really spent a lot time on all sorts of things at the bookshop. When you come back from overseas if you were a Rhodes scholar or whatever, there is a tendency in New Zealand, it's dissipating somewhat, but in those days you were a smartass. And even people within the Art and Craft Branch when they went over to America to investigate or do whatever, when they came back – nobody wanted to know, and I thought it was so disgusting.<sup>65</sup> Dawn Percy came back from being overseas for several years – she was a smart cookie, very astute and Gordon didn't want to know anything about what she'd done or where she had been or whatever. He had his own kernel ...<sup>66</sup>

Percy recalls her enthusiasm upon her return and her dismay at the way personal matters had permeated professional contexts, muddying the waters:

I had just returned from two years in Philadelphia. In New York, leading art educationalists like Victor D'Amico and Lois Lord were rapt that here in New Zealand we were so far ahead. I was all fired up with countless ideas, but Gordon seemed a changed person – preoccupied with personalities.<sup>67</sup>

Artist and former Art and Craft Branch Organiser for Auckland and Wellington, Jeanne Macaskill, suggests that there were two factors operating. She explains:

When I came back to New Zealand I looked up two or three of the people who had been of my year who were working in various places and they'd all been let down by Tove. And they all felt unwanted and neglected. He was not good in that respect, and I think I can understand how Elwyn feels, because it will be the two things, it will be a certain professional jealousy that works along. There are a number of people in tertiary institutions that I know who've done overseas trips who have had Fulbrights who have had Churchills, and who have gone back to work and wanted to report on it and no one wants to listen. No one says, give us a talk on it. No one says, what was it like at such and such

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<sup>65</sup> Interview, Merv Holland, May 28, 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., September 20, 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Henderson, 1998, p. 156.

University – I had all that too. And it's a New Zealand thing, I hate to say – It may be universal...<sup>68</sup>

It is a phenomenon also described by historian James McNeish in *Dance of the Peacocks: New Zealanders in Exile in the time of Hitler and Mao Tse-Tung*, which details the experiences of three of the 12 New Zealand Rhodes scholars, Ian Milner, Geoffrey Cox and James Bertram all of whom arrived back in New Zealand highly qualified and looking for something useful to do, only to find themselves shut out and adrift. The discrepancy between the reception of Rhodes Scholars in New Zealand relative to other countries was unusual enough to prompt Lord Lothian, the General Secretary of the Rhodes Trust in England, to write a letter to his Rhodes counterpart in New Zealand, which stated:

Dear Lord Bledisloe, I have come across lately an impression that Rhodes Scholars are not welcome or encouraged when they return to New Zealand. The trustees of course are anxious that all Rhodes Scholars should return to the country of their origin, for that was clearly Mr Rhodes' intention. In point of fact, in practically every other case except New Zealand and Bermuda, Rhodes Scholars do return to the country of their origin, but in the case of New Zealand only 14 have returned out of a total of 32 and, what is more significant, only three since 1921.<sup>69</sup>

McNeish writes that although there is no record of the Governor-General's reply to Lothian's question, an answer was provided by Jack Bennet, a Rhodes Scholar who returned to New Zealand in 1939 and then left the same year to take up a position at Cambridge University. When asked why he had not returned permanently to New Zealand, Bennet replied, "[t]he reason so few of us returned in the thirties, is that there was nothing to return to."<sup>70</sup> Bennet, a junior fellow at Queen's College, Oxford, had hoped his studies as a Rhodes Scholar would lead to a job offer from the University of Auckland upon his return.<sup>71</sup> However, aside from several hours work supervising an exam, no offer

<sup>68</sup> Interview, Jeanne Macaskill, December 10, 2005.

<sup>69</sup> James McNeish, *Dance of the Peacocks: New Zealanders in Exile in the Time of Hitler and Mao Tse-Tung* (Auckland, New Zealand: Random House, 2003), pp. 269- 70; Note: Contributing factors may have been the small size of New Zealand compared with other major Rhodes constituencies such as Australia, Canada and South Africa; the fact that at this time the NZ Public Service had a cadet entry rather than a graduate system with an Administrative Class which meant that many Rhodes scholars found themselves over trained and too senior for the positions available. In some fields, it was simply not possible to make a business career in a given field in New Zealand. Other personal factors such as marriage may also have played a part in scholars' decisions not to return to New Zealand (Hugh Templeton, Rhodes Scholar 1953, Per. Com., October 2009).

<sup>70</sup> McNeish, 2003, p. 270.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

was made by the University. The position he was offered at Cambridge in contrast was C. S. Lewis Chair of Medieval and Renaissance English.<sup>72</sup>

In reviewing the opportunities and constraints of Richardson's institutional location, it is clear that although he was working in a climate hospitable to innovation in creative education, there were distinctive characteristics of the New Zealand context that had a considerable impact both on the trajectory of the reforms and on the individuals involved. Beeby's lack of a written arts and crafts policy and the scope that his administrative style allowed for a single charismatic individual, Gordon Tovey, to interpret and supervise the development of art and craft education according to his own idiosyncratic philosophy amplified the potential for ideological conflict. This potential was further increased by the intimate scale of the New Zealand art and craft community. Although Richardson and Tovey were in general agreement on the importance of creative education to children's educational development, their divergence on the particulars created a deep ideological schism. The fact that most of the staff in the head office experienced similar pedagogical difficulties suggests that there was more to the conflict between Richardson and Tovey than a clash of two large egos. If, as Watson jibed, Richardson was simply trying to do "what the leaders of the 'system' have been exhorting teachers to do for three-quarters of a century", then this deep ideological rift with Tovey as National Supervisor of Art and Craft points once again to the contingent nature of the translation from policy into practice.<sup>73</sup>

The Oruaiti experiment stands both as a testimony to the belief of the Department of Education in the important role of art and craft in education and as evidence of a progressive stance on educational innovation. Richardson's status as an exemplar of these policies was affirmed by the support of the Department of Education of NZCER's decision to publish *In the Early World*. While this might seem to bring into question Richardson's designation as an 'educational rebel,' his status as "model of good practice" in a system, which as Beeby observed, had one foot in one "stage" and the other in a stage decades earlier, locates him firmly at the spearhead of educational reform.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Note: Paul Tipping, Honorary Secretary of the NZ Rhodes Scholars Association, writes that the NZ Rhodes Association's current mailing list of NZ Rhodes Scholars shows 69 resident in New Zealand, and 50 resident elsewhere. This is an incomplete snapshot, as it excludes those who have died and those for whom the Association has no address. It does however indicate that, generally speaking, the generation of the 1920s and 1930s were much less likely to make their careers in NZ than subsequent generations (P. Tipping, Per. Com. October, 2009).

<sup>73</sup> J. Watson letter to V. Moberg, April 1, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* - USA, 1968-1970.

### ***Locating Richardson Historically***

My entry point into Richardson's work was through his book *In the Early World* and an initial interview. When I first began, I had little knowledge of the history of progressive educational reforms in art and craft or of the historical context in which Richardson was working in the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, my research process was one of working backwards to examine curricular reforms and social and intellectual currents in art education in order to contextualise Richardson's work. As I progressed, the degree to which Richardson's educational philosophy resonated with the ideas of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey became increasingly apparent. Ideologically, I could see that he was "standing on the shoulders of giants" and was in a historical sense, very much a 'progressive' educator. I anticipated that despite his antipathy towards my historical contextualisation of his work, that the combination of his strong scientific background, his appreciation for Dewey and our lengthy discussions on the subject of progressive educational values, would lead him to concede at some point, even tacitly, that 'progressive' was in fact his educational genus.

I sought to assure Richardson that locating him in an intellectual historical context alongside other progressive educators, would not diminish the originality of his approach, but would in fact provide readers with ideological reference points that would enhance their understanding of his work. Appealing to his scientific sensibilities, I suggested that as a malacology student, for example, the knowledge that the species *Agnewia tritoniformis* belongs to the Muricid Family of the Gastropoda Class immediately tells us that it is a member of the largest family of marine snails. This knowledge, however, would not lessen in any way our appreciation of the distinctive characteristics of this individual species. Our aesthetic wonder at its rounded whorls, fawn and black axial ribs and frilly flanges is in fact enriched by our knowledge of its Family and Class. In education as in science, I argued, an understanding of the general does not occlude the particular.

My historical contextualisation of Richardson's professional biography forced this particular point into the foreground. On a fundamental level, Richardson felt that the general did in fact occlude the particular. Had I elected to do a straight biography, or a stand-alone history of Oruaiti School, this tension would not have arisen. Because he viewed the social and historical context as essentially unconnected with what he

personally achieved at Oruaiti School, he felt that its inclusion in my thesis offered little more than a distraction. Unwilling to simply dismiss Richardson's position as the product of egotistical manoeuvring or professional insecurity alone, I was left with the following questions: what exactly lay behind his anti-scientific attitude towards a historical contextualisation of his work? How, given his distaste for identification as a progressive educator, did he see himself as a teacher and how would he like to be remembered professionally?

It is important to add at this point that my desire to locate Richardson in this way was not about seeking an ideologically tidy 'fit' relative to his place in educational history. As well as hoping to locate Richardson within the historical context of his intellectual forbears, my interest in his professional identity was motivated by a further three factors. First, was the fact that Richardson at 85 was actively interested and engaged through letter writing with the question of his 'professional handle' as he referred to it, and my research offered a unique opportunity to explore and record this. While our knowing, for example, that Picasso's classification of himself as a painter would be unlikely to change our view of his paintings, it would, however, offer a unique dimension to both appreciators and critics of his work. The same held true for Richardson as an educator, I believed.

Second, I recognised that there is a haphazardness to the labels people are given. The categorizations, appellations and titles that editors, journalists and academics devise often take on a life of their own and continue to circulate even if they are inaccurate. Did Richardson, I asked, wish to be remembered as an 'artist teacher' as Watson from NZCER dubbed him in the 1960s? Did he favour Auckland University's 'educational rebel,' or did he have a preferred term? If we accept, as Bullough states, that when seeking to understand a teacher's practice, "the road to understanding takes a biographical turn, not a detour" then we must accept that Richardson's opinion on his own professional identity matters.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, and related to this, is the problem that even when such terms and labels are accurate and elegant, they have a tendency, like translations, to date. Richard Howard, a Pulitzer Prize winning poet, critic and translator, views translation as a "constantly fluctuating art". He explains: "The master work, the generating text, contains multiple

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<sup>74</sup> Bullough, 1998, p. 19.



possibilities...The translator can only choose one, and the one he chooses is going to show signs, after thirty years, of chips and cracks.”<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, he believes, new translations of classic works are required to maintain the freshness of the work for new audiences.<sup>76</sup> For his translation of Marcel Proust’s, *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, for instance, he changed the title with which we are familiar, *Remembrance of Things Past* to the slightly more dynamic and possibly more accurate, *In Search of Lost Time*.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, there are many examples of labels which are no longer used or whose meanings have changed. British ethologist and self-proclaimed atheist Richard Dawkins, for instance, would probably have been labelled a freethinker in the nineteenth century. Readers in the 1950s would have been puzzled by my reference to Richardson’s ‘students’ as they were called ‘pupils,’ at this time.

Correspondingly, in choosing a title for a book, an editor, like a translator, seeks to touch the pulse of the times in which the book is published. The Pantheon publication of Richardson’s book *In the Early World*, for example, bore the additional subtitle: “*Discovering Art through Crafts*.” As it stands, the subtitle is an accurate reflection of the great interest in art and craft education during this period of our educational history, both abroad and nationally; but it is not necessarily the most apt. Given Richardson’s emphasis on environmental study at Oruaiti School and the fact that he described himself as “basically a scientist who went teaching”, the subtitle might have more accurately been “*Discovering Art through Science*.”

### **The Force of History on Individual Talent**

Richardson’s ambivalence towards his educational past can be understood as the natural outcome of his desire to be truly original, to make a fresh contribution to the field of education rather than to offer a mere addendum to the recognised ideas of the progressive educators who preceded him. Richardson’s fear of being aligned with others was anchored in the belief that to be influenced was to be less original. Bloom quotes a letter from poet Wallace Stevens to Richard Eberhart, which illuminates the problem of influence:

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<sup>75</sup> Caroline Seebom, Estelle Ellis, and Christopher Simon, *At Home with Books: How Booklovers Live with and Care for Their Libraries* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 277-278.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

I sympathize with your denial of any influence on my part. This sort of thing always jars me because, in my own case, I am not conscious of having been influenced by anybody and have purposely held off from reading highly mannered people like Eliot and Pound so that I should not absorb anything, even unconsciously. But there is a kind of critic who spends his time dissecting what he reads for echoes, imitations, influences, as if no one was ever simply himself but is always compounded of a lot of other people.<sup>78</sup>

Richardson's fear of being categorised was based on a similar sense that interpretations drawn from historical associations and patterns were so abstract as to be pointless. Like the poet Stevens, he also sought to distance himself from his own professional field:

I have been largely out of contact with educational philosophy, Yes, I've read a little, but set it aside in my development of my philosophy. I even avoided Educational Philosophy terms because I do not want to be classified in those ways. ...<sup>79</sup>

In Bloom's view, it is not possible to reduce poetic influence to "source-study, to the history of ideas, to the patterning of images".<sup>80</sup> He believes that any real study of influence can only be through study of the "life-cycle of poet-as-poet".<sup>81</sup> From this perspective, the question of influence is most fruitfully explored through an examination of Richardson's life history, that is, through exploring his 'life-cycle of teacher-as-teacher'.

Although it was through researching Richardson's biography that the influence of his early educative experiences on the development of his philosophy were revealed, my close study of his historical context – (what Bloom rejects as 'source study') demonstrated that this kind of individual inspiration does not in fact occur in a vacuum. Even when the teacher, poet, or artist seeks isolation from outside influence, they are inextricably touched both by what has come before and the constraints and opportunities of the place and time in which they work.

Viewed in this context, claims of originality and authenticity in the face of obvious relatedness seem to point to something else; to the fact that real inspiration, whether in educational administration, poetry, or teaching, is by its very nature always a singular experience. What is more, the process of inspiration, as Arlene Croce observed in her

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<sup>78</sup> Bloom, 1973, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> ESR, Per. Com., January 26, 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

essay on the choreographer Balanchine Said, seems to “take place in a kind of infinite regress”.<sup>82</sup> Neurologist Oliver Sacks also noted this phenomenon.<sup>83</sup> Sacks cites one of his idols, Italian chemist Stanislao Cannizzaro, who observed: “It often happens that the mind of a person who is learning a new science has to pass through all the phases which the science itself has exhibited in its historical evolution.”<sup>84</sup> Cannizzaro’s words resonated for Sacks, he explains, because he himself experienced a similar process as he developed his own scientific knowledge. “I, too, in a way, was living through, recapitulating, the history of chemistry in myself, rediscovering all the phases though which it had passed.”<sup>85</sup> Viewed in this light, Richardson’s reluctance to be classified historically can be seen as a result of the fact that, like Sacks, he was also experiencing the creation of teaching and learning anew. In this sense, the external field of educational theory represented a disruptive intrusion into what was a profoundly personal creative process. He said:

Every time I’m fool enough to read some philosophical statement about teaching I feel terribly sad. I certainly developed and was educated by the Oruaiti process of creativity to grow into a very different kind of person than I would have if dosed upon Educational Philosophy.<sup>86</sup>

Like Cannizzaro and Sacks, Vladimir Lenin also experienced progress in science as “a development that repeats, as it were, the stages already passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher plane...a development, so to speak, in spirals, not in a straight line”.<sup>87</sup> Beeby, who recognised the force of history in his own work, described the sense of professional déjà vu this cyclical process engendered. In his autobiography he wrote:

I have just read through all the ministerial annual reports on education from 1930 to 1939, and it has been a chastening experience. The roots of many of the changes that occurred in the 1940s lay deep in the past, and some ideas that, over the years, I had come to regard as mine were already in print, if only as a glimpse into the future. If I had the courage to study the records of my most illustrious predecessor, George Hogben, I fear I should be left with little that I could claim as completely my own.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Arlene Croce, “Balanchine Said: What Was the Source of the Choreographer’s Celebrated Utterances?” *The New Yorker*, 2009, pp. 36-38.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>85</sup> Sacks, 2002, p. 155.

<sup>86</sup> Richardson, August 15, 2007.

<sup>87</sup> Lenin. V., 1934, cited in Luria, 1979, p. 14.

<sup>88</sup> Beeby, 1992, p. 127.

Although Richardson did not appear to experience a similar realisation in regard to his own work, the observations of Cannizzaro, Lenin, Sacks and Beeby do shed light on the questions of Richardson's originality, the force of history on individual talent and the ethereal nature of inspiration. Their insights also go some way in explaining Richardson's need to separate himself from the weight of his intellectual forbears and his professional field both at the time he was working and in his reaction to my research.

### **A Quest for a Professional Identity**

The question of Richardson's professional identity as a teacher was one that had occupied him during his years at Oruaiti. The fact that he had to explain himself and what he was about to influential men such as Beeby, George Parkyn and John Watson from NZCER, as well as to uncomprehending inspectors, staff from the Art and Craft Branch and visiting students, meant that it was a topic to which he had already given some thought. When the issue arose in my research because of his rejection of the term 'progressive educator', 'romantic scientist' and others we had discussed, I anticipated with interest his own definitive statement on his professional designation. However, I discovered over the course of our correspondence that Richardson had struggled considerably with his definition in the past and continued to wrestle with it. Over a six-month period the subject dominated our correspondence with Richardson's letters arriving in rapid volleys. As the excerpts below demonstrate, he was keenly interested in the issue and devoted considerable time to trying to work out a definition that encapsulated both his philosophical orientation and his teacher identity. I cite from his letters at some length chronologically to give a sense of his engagement with the subject and the direction his thoughts on the topic took until our discussion ground to a standstill.

February 21, 2008

I certainly was not progressive in any sense. I used words like: We were 'progressively creative' – we made, did, built, we expressed our feelings about what we did. Some of what we said and did was seen as expressive and creative. I bandied with 'expressive' – for a while I avoided creative. I wanted to be 'startled with the surprise' of something before I recognised that I was looking at a creative venture.

March 4, 2008

I thought often of creative environmentalism...what was I? An experimental educator sounds too manipulative – a facilitator is more my style...So Elwyn Stuart Richardson was an evocative (or is it innovative) teacher of expressive learning about the environment... perhaps you would like a trifle more definition: a creatively innovative teacher? (better and more accurate than the reverse order). I think this puts expressive educator to rest – I never saw myself as the ‘art teacher.’

March 19, 2008

I came across a part of your letter, which fascinates me: your continuation of the defining of me and my approach. Am I an ‘artistic teacher’ and what does that mean? As teacher and I’d say poet perhaps? I was poetic! ...I would say that I thought of my philosophy as one of being an artistic scientist with a dash of philosophical humanness! Not well said I fear but this is what I felt and saw in our approaches. I define myself as an environmental teacher who had a personal aesthetic desire to understand with feelings the beauty of nature. I taught so that my T. [tamariki] found out, saw, witnessed these values. So:

- I was a ‘door opener’ to the aesthetic world
- I directed them to observe aesthetic things
- I rewarded them verbally when they made astounding comments
- We collected, recorded, expressed such environmental things ... I’d be happy with ‘artistic teacher’ who was a strong environmentalist...How do we get a short sharp definition out of all that?

Artistically poetic aesthetically based teacher is extremely close to what I saw myself as!!

March 20, 2008

I got hold of the creative idea, and for a time, until it didn’t matter, I called myself a creative scientist, for I saw those qualities in good science. But what of the arts? Were these words enough? I saw myself primarily as an environmental teacher who taught through language and art.

April 01, 2008

What about an aesthetic teacher – one who does everything as well as I can? ...I was really teaching aesthetics, living by it. Responding and teaching it to my Tamariki.

... My teaching/believing was both scientific and artistic...Artistic teacher might call for definition? What was his art or craft? 'Romantic scientist' may possibly give readers a chance to imply the looseness of a romantic approach? Emotionally – feelings and not scientific facts? Undisciplined emotion? ...I can't get to ideas like romantic science. It sounds a bit like undisciplined emotional expression. Much of our art was derived from science...in our environment. I abhorred undisciplined emotional expression. Indeed, we didn't see it, even at school... Oruaiti [we] knew of the satisfactions of movements towards precision. We felt needs for clarity of expression and precision in science.

April 30, 2008

'Creatively innovative artistic teacher' I see myself embracing that decision...So I was a creatively sponsoring teacher with a scientific basis. I began teaching observation of trees, weather, grasses, river, wind, fire, birds, insects, centipedes, bugs, et al...so creatively innovative scientific teacher (& pupils) covers my vote. My basis was science: my botany, chemistry even, physics, and geology.

May 6, 2008

I thought of myself as a scientist working to lead my tamariki into its arts as young exponents of the approach...I felt often that I was a scientific teacher but one in whom poetic thinking, writing and reading were very important. So, there you go Watson! Artistic, as you say, but also soaked in science! ...Artist teacher is deceptive. Although I did pot. –Romantic scientist sounds unreal – even soft? Pity we can't say: scientartific?... I could live with innovative scientific teacher. But I also see that it has other purist meanings more suited to pure science! Somehow I need to keep the 'Wal' in the title. It seems, in reading this over, that artistic has to be included, because of its 'Wal-ian value!' Somewhere [creative] scientific teacher' seems to remain in the bottom of the pot? If I put artistic in? Artistic Scientific Teacher.

It became increasingly clear over time to both Richardson and me that there was a degree of absurdity to the quest for a professional designation. Instead of an elegant encapsulation by Richardson, there was a frenetic oscillation over the gulf language seemed to create between the world of art and the world of science. We arrived at frankenwords like

‘scientartic’.<sup>89</sup> It was evident that we were trying to find language for processes, which were themselves divided by language, a problem that has been recognised in the past by physicists and mystics alike. It was a dilemma that led German theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg, for example, to remark, “[t]he problems of language here are really serious. We wish to speak in some way about the structure of the atoms... But we cannot speak about atoms in ordinary language.”<sup>90</sup> He recognised that “every word or concept, clear as it may seem to be, has only a limited range of applicability.”<sup>91</sup> This was increasingly apparent to Richardson as he discarded one term after another. He was torn between the need to ‘put a name’ on what he was doing, both for his own understanding and for others, and his realisation that the nature of the processes he sought to describe transcended language and were, in some cases, better left alone – a dilemma also recognised by Ludwig Wittgenstein who said, in another context, “[w]hat we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”<sup>92</sup> Richardson wrote:

What was I up to I asked myself – making up a name for a process which may not have needed a name? (I had the little grey men to contend with and persuade and I remember just doing that!!) (So I was to label processes for my understanding). Neville in his position just did it! No names! ...Integration was my word in my head and heart.<sup>93</sup>

Richardson’s preference was always for ‘no names,’ a paradoxical proposition for an ambitious teacher who was widely considered an exemplar of innovative educational practice. Throughout our correspondence, and in relation to the question of his professional identity too, Richardson often returned to a comment made by his Oglala Sioux Indian friend, John Kills-in-Water. When Richardson asked about the nature of his tribe’s art, the Indian elder is said to have replied, “[w]e have no art. We do everything as well as we can.” His words resonated with Richardson’s pragmatic philosophy as well as with his belief that the artefacts of the Oruaiti students spoke for themselves in ways that the language of education could not. To discuss these products and processes he believed, added little and possibly even detracted from what had been achieved. Indeed, his concept of integration was predicated on this awareness of the non-verbal qualities of expression:

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<sup>89</sup> Coined by Lewis Carroll to describe words he used in *Jabberwocky*, a portmanteau (literally a two sided leather travelling case) or frankenword, is a word formed by combining two or more other words.

<sup>90</sup> Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (London: Wildwood House, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>92</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F Pears and B. F McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1889-1951 [1975]).

<sup>93</sup> ESR., Per. Com., June 24, 2008.

“There are some things you say in language and poetry, in posture, in how you hold your hand, in how you dance, how you express, but there are some things that you can’t say in those forms of language at all. You’ve got to go into imagery...painting, or printmaking or something of that order.”<sup>94</sup>

The problem of finding a language for artistic experience was one recognised by American philosopher Susanne Langer who suggests that “the life of feeling requires a different form”, a form which is “characteristic of art and is, indeed, the essence and measure of art”. The difficulty we experience in talking usefully about art, Langer believes, is because we generally think of a work of art as representing something, and of its symbolic function, therefore, as a representation. However, in her view:

...Many works of art represent nothing whatever. A building, a pot, a tune is usually beautiful without intentionally representing anything; and its unintentional representation may be found in bad and ugly spaces too. But if it is beautiful it is expressive; what it expresses is not an idea of some other thing, but an idea of feeling. Representational works, if they are good art, are so for the same reasons as non-representational ones. They have more than one symbolic function – representation...and also artistic expression, which is presentation of ideas of feeling.<sup>95</sup>

Richardson had similar feelings about the process of trying to put what he was doing as a teacher into words. He was consistently unhappy with others’ interpretations of his work and yet had difficulty himself in articulating the feeling component of the processes that characterised the children’s work at Oruaiti. He viewed education as a metaphor and welcomed the ambiguity and plurality this implied. It was not surprising, therefore, that it was in the poetry of Eliot, Cummings and Wordsworth rather than educational literature that he found definitions which seemed to fit the educational processes he sought to describe. His preferred explanation of his theory of integration, for example, was “emotion recollected in tranquility” (a line from Wordsworth’s preface to *Lyrical Ballads*), which is not unlike Langer’s description of music as “the tonal analogue of emotive life”.<sup>96</sup> When asked to elaborate on such statements in our correspondence he generally excused himself,

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<sup>94</sup> ESR., Interview, March 7, 2005.

<sup>95</sup> Susanne Langer, *Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures* (New York: Scribner, 1957). p. 124.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.



stating that he preferred not to involve himself in discussions about “philosophical complexities.”<sup>97</sup> He warned:

Perhaps you see a substance, a process behind all this but you won’t see a philosophy in words. My philosophy was the equivalent of: ‘I have measured out my life with coffee spoons’ – about the charm, delights, closeness, accuracies, surprises particularly, and so on of the products of art as it explained art itself...the tamariki would come forward and trace a finger over a part of a print, painting, pot, and even say nothing – the finger said it.<sup>98</sup>

It is little wonder then, that when Richardson came to try to write about his work in his book *In the Early World*, that he experienced considerable difficulty.

### Locating ‘In the Early World’

As an educational book, *In the Early World* occupies a unique position in New Zealand publishing history. For the New Zealand Council of Educational Research, it marked a number of firsts. With its hard cover and sumptuous colour illustrations, it was the most expensive book they had yet produced and the second biggest print run, surpassed only by Dorothy Neal White’s, *Books Before Five*, which came out ten years previously and which cost a fraction of the price to produce.<sup>99</sup> Although NZCER had already published several books on educational experiments in the late 1930s by innovative post-primary teachers such as Wild, Somerset and Strachan, *In the Early World* was the first such book to enter into mainstream teacher education; throughout the late 1960s and 1970s it was a prescribed text in most teachers colleges’ programmes in New Zealand.<sup>100</sup> It was also the first book published by NZCER to be taken up with great acclaim by an American publisher.<sup>101</sup> The only other New Zealand teacher to have had their own writing published and celebrated abroad at this time was Sylvia Ashton Warner, whose autobiographical work *Spinster*, was first published in England by Secker and Warburg in 1958. Her international profile was raised further when this book was adapted for film in the United

<sup>97</sup> ESR Per. Com., October 12, 2005.

<sup>98</sup> ESR Per. Com., April 25, 2006, (Quote from T. S Eliot, *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*, 1917).

<sup>99</sup> NZCER Publications 1964-5, Alexander Turnbull Library Archives, 94706-73/05.

<sup>100</sup> NZCER Publications 1964-5, Alexander Turnbull Library Archives, 94706-73/05 archived correspondence relating to complimentary copies of *In the Early World*, 1973, in particular, R. M. Barham, University of Otago; J R Osborne, North Shore Teachers’ College; J C Irving NZCER.

<sup>101</sup> *Books Before Five*, an account of the books White read to her daughter Carol, was also published in the United States by Heinemann Educational books but not until 1984, thirty years after it was published in New Zealand.

States and starred Shirley MacLaine. *Spinster* was followed by her semi-biographical work *Teacher*, which was published in London by Virago in 1963.

From a critical perspective, the American publication of *In the Early World* in 1969 was significant on two counts. First, it created a context in which Richardson would divulge the depth of his feelings of abandonment by the Department of Education in his correspondence with Watson. The bitter dedication he proposed for the Pantheon edition is testimony to this and so too are his frequent jibes about ‘little grey men’ and ‘the system’ in his letters to Watson. Secondly, the tensions that arose out of the publishing negotiations between Moberg, Watson and Richardson forced into the open the question of Richardson’s writing style and the degree to which his work marked a significant departure from traditional educational writing.

There are several educational questions raised by Richardson’s emblematic approach in *In the Early World*. If, for instance, Richardson is conceptualised as an ‘artist teacher’, who, as Watson suggested, should not be expected to ‘explain’ the principles behind his work, what are the implications of this for his exposure to mainstream educational considerations and his educational legacy? What happens when we contemplate *In the Early World* as a work of art, rather than an educational treatise? What is said that would otherwise remain unsaid?

Richardson’s new introduction for the Pantheon edition which included more sociological background about the Oruaiti community was problematic for Watson. He was initially willing to grant Pantheon permission to include it if it was edited. However, his editorial largesse evaporated as he found Moberg’s arguments in favour of its inclusion to be “quite inappropriate and possibly even impertinent”.<sup>102</sup> In an uncharacteristically blunt letter, which he would later apologise for, Watson took issue with her assessment that his reservations about the relevance of the introduction were a result of his being an “observer at close range”.<sup>103</sup> It was not in fact a question of cultural myopia, he argued, but the simple fact that he found much of the sociological background Richardson provided to be “nonsense, irrespective of one’s closeness to it. Indeed we are not close to what he

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., May 30, 1969.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

describes but we recognise the inaccuracies in what appear to you to be ‘admirably direct’, ‘forthright, reasonable and clear’.’<sup>104</sup>

To Richardson, who was unaware of the increasingly prickly exchanges between the two editors, Watson wrote:

We would be happy to help you polish up the grace and style of the piece you have written if she [Moberg] really needs it, and if this is acceptable to you. No doubt you are well aware that you do not find it easy to write anything fresh about matters of pedagogical principle, educational philosophy and so on and as far as I am concerned you should not be expected to do so. Whenever you do so you invite the type of comment that Featherstone makes in his New Republic article ‘very old tired, much-abused formulas’ and they deflect the reader from the freshness, joy and simplicity of what you accomplished at Oruaiti. We do not expect artists, musicians, or poets to define the theoretical, sociological or philosophical principles behind their achievements, and I don’t think that you should be expected to do this either.<sup>105</sup>

To Moberg he wrote:

Our concern is not simply to maintain our own standards but also to protect Mr Richardson from ridicule. If Joseph Featherstone considers some familiar pronouncements in the book itself to be ‘very old, tired, much abused formulas’ he would surely have a field day with these paragraphs. It is then with very considerable regret that I am advising you that we are not prepared to give you permission to depart from our contract in order to publish this sort of material as an introduction.<sup>106</sup>

The tension between Watson’s view and that of Moberg, who believed that more sociological background would benefit American readers, was mirrored in the reviews the book received on both sides of the globe. The more critical reviewers clearly recognised the difficulty Richardson experienced when trying to shift from his rich descriptive mode to a more philosophical one. Some felt that he had managed it successfully, while others believed that his vaguely generic philosophical comments detracted from the freshness of

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> J. Watson personal communication to ESR, March 12, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* - USA, 1968-70.

<sup>106</sup> J. Watson personal communication to V. Moberg, May 30, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* - USA, 1968-70.

the book. C J Sturm's review, for example, seemed to affirm for Richardson his own confession to Watson, "I'm no damn good at philosophical writing."<sup>107</sup> Sturm observed:

The book itself could have been improved, I feel, with some pruning, especially in the examples of written work, but the prints and photographs are so good that a certain uniformity hardly palls. However, the very attractiveness of the book may distract the specialist who is primarily concerned with a new and revolutionary theory of education, while the author's contributions towards such a theory, mixed up as they are with examples and descriptions of the children's work, may put off the ordinary reader whose attention was caught in the first place by the pretty pictures. It is extremely difficult to satisfy two quite different readers with the one book, and I'm not sure that Mr Richardson has really succeeded here...However Mr Richardson has proved beyond doubt that his discoveries, integrated into a design for education, and his methods, applied with wisdom and humility, can have an almost magical effect on children.<sup>108</sup>

Richardson's inductive approach to writing about his work was also noted in John Melser's foreword to the book, which warned readers that the style was "uneven, often almost wilful in its approach". It was an observation also made in Featherstone's New Republic review:

It takes time for the reader to understand that a long account of how the class took up pottery is meant to be emblematic of a whole style of teaching...Its few ideas are densely wound around examples of actual work on the part of children who seem very alive.<sup>109</sup>

In a similar vein, John A Michael who reviewed the book for the journal, *Art Education*, wondered if perhaps his unconventional approach might have been too understated for American readers:

Needless to say, Mr. Richardson is a master teacher knowing when and how to bring about creative growth in many areas. He tends to let the reader draw his own conclusions from the events which happen at Oruaiti School. He does not "lecture" but presents situations and shows outcomes via student work and activities. However, less perceptive readers may not be aware of the teaching expertise presented. In a text

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<sup>107</sup> ESR personal communication to J. Watson, March 25, 1969, Archives New Zealand, AAVZ W3418, 17c3/1, *In the Early World* - USA, 1968-70.

<sup>108</sup> "An educational book with a difference" (clipping of book review provided by Richardson, unknown journal), No. 53, December 1965, reviewed by J. C. Sturm.

<sup>109</sup> Featherstone, 1971, pp. 102, 107.

of this type, American readers are seldom confronted by such a subtle approach, refreshing to this reader.<sup>110</sup>

Other notable reviewers, such as writer, educator and activist Jonathan Kozol who reviewed the book for the *New York Times Book Review* in September 1969 were charmed by what they saw as the book's lack of pretence and appreciated Richardson's straightforward approach, which allowed readers to draw their own conclusions based on the rich material provided. Paradoxically, Kozol, an American, also lauded Richardson's decision not to single out the achievements of his Maori students, observing:

One of the consistent tendencies among American authors writing about their pupils in the past few years has been a near-compulsive inclination to romanticize hopelessly their literary and artistic output. This tendency has, for obvious and very human reasons, reached its peak in the writings of white teachers on black pupils. Here, above all, it has appeared heretical and dangerous to many writers to indicate any priority of excellence. In their effort to avoid a semblance of racism, of intellectual arrogance or any other brand of adult condescension, many sensitive white teachers have in effect defrauded their black pupils by denying them the criteria with which to form a sense of values. Richardson admires art, youth and honesty a great deal too much to do this. As a consequence, he has given his young children the ultimate honour of dealing with them only as fellow artists and fellow authors with whom he cannot afford to be less than candid. He did not come to this point easily, or directly, and one of the great pleasures in pursuing his narration is to observe the steps by which he got there.<sup>111</sup>

On a similar note, New Zealand poet James K Baxter wrote:

I have held that it is impossible for anyone to produce works of art in a classroom; but Mr Richardson has all but convinced me that the impossible has been achieved. If so, there must have been occasions when his school ceased to be a school and the angels held their breath.<sup>112</sup>

Reviewing the book for the New Zealand Teachers College Association in 1965, D B Wilkie predicted:

As the pattern of trial and error and discovering unfolds so does the philosophy so that *In the Early World* becomes a testimony to a teacher's developing creed. Long after *In the Early World* has been superseded as a book about teaching ...it will be valued for its considerable intrinsic worth. I. D. Richards, a literary critic, defined the

<sup>110</sup> John. A Michael, "In the Early World - Review," *Art Education* 23, no. 9 (1970).

<sup>111</sup> Kozol, "In the Early World - Review."

<sup>112</sup> Baxter, "In the Early World."

arts as ‘the storehouse of human value’ and *In the Early World* could well be one of these all by itself.<sup>113</sup>

Wilkie’s iconographic conception of the book was echoed by British writer and musician Richard Lewis, who wrote:

This book is important not only as a brilliant demonstration of the creative capacities of all children but also in its profound implications as the nature of the learning process. Elwyn Richardson is a master teacher in that he allows the child to seek his own innermost response to the world around him while at the same time making each child deeply aware of both the limitations and possibilities of his individual expressive vocabulary. Not only does this book point to a new direction in education, its very existence is a landmark in the recognition of human potential and dignity.<sup>114</sup>

For some, including myself, to read *In the Early World* was to have an artistic experience. Fragments of poems and images linger long after putting the book aside. The impermanent nature of the children’s pots featured in the book, for instance, reminded poet, James K. Baxter, of the urn-like quality of Japanese vases, those “squarish” forms, which carry in them the “knowledge of death by the living”. In the children’s spirit masks, he saw a “certain amount of a child’s sense of what is terrible” represented.<sup>115</sup> Such an aesthetic response points to more than an act of simply viewing; it is an encounter, an experience of being brought into relation. Clearly both the memory of these poignant images and the almost subliminal way in which the reader remembers them, are intensely idiosyncratic processes with implications for how the book is remembered.

The correlation between the aesthetic experience Richardson’s emblematic book engenders and one experienced when viewing an artwork such as a painting, is usefully illuminated by Peter Schjeldahl, who relates his encounter with a Dutch still life painting: Francisco de Zurbarán’s oil *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose*, painted in Seville in 1633. After visiting the painting, he writes, after a gap of many years, he was astounded to discover that he had been so entranced with the “celestial beauty” of the silver plate of citrons, the “baggy, nubby cousins of lemons”, that he did not remember the basket of oranges in the centre of the painting, nor the cup and saucer with a pink rose on the right

<sup>113</sup> Wilkie, D. B., *New Zealand Teachers College Association newsletter*, No. 3, 1965.

<sup>114</sup> Richard Lewis, dust jacket quote for Pantheon hardback edition of *In the Early World*, 1969.

<sup>115</sup> Baxter, “In the Early World.”

hand side of the picture.<sup>116</sup> His recollection, he realised with a jolt, “had amputated two-thirds of a tour de force”.<sup>117</sup> Trying to make sense of this he writes:

Research has confirmed what experience posits: strongly emotional events linger in vivid but narrowly focused memory, etching certain facts – a gun pointed at you, say, – while occluding pretty much everything incidental to them (such as the colour of the gunman’s hair, or whether he may have had any). In fact this work still strikes me as about those citrons, never mind their impeccable companions.<sup>118</sup>

The machinations of memory, he suggests, along with the heart’s “incurable partialities” ensure that an encounter with a work of art will always be an intensely personal and highly subjective experience.<sup>119</sup> In the same way, accentuated by his symbolic approach, Richardson’s *In the Early World* remains for many people as much about those poems, paintings and pots as about how this learning actually took place. Readers of the book have a personal aesthetic experience, which, depending on the individual, transcends, occludes, or symbolises the educational message. Kozol, for example, wrote:

Page after page reveals to us the intensity of the pleasure that children took in the development and assessment of their own capabilities. Dozens of reproductions of prints, photos, and paintings attest to their success, and entire chapters are given over to descriptions of their writing. The last chapter is a full-length poem entitled “Valley Sounds,” written and illustrated with block prints by the pupils. It is a wonderful poem with scarcely a false note and never a word or phrase that seems unnatural. Reading these verses and examining the illustrations one senses with envy the richness of the lives these children led. We do not have this kind of experience very often in an American public school.<sup>120</sup>

In a remarkably similar still life encounter to that described by Peter Schjeldahl, and one that also features a 17th century virtuoso citron, Mark Doty, an American poet, recalls being “being drawn into the orbit” of Jan Davidsz de Heem’s exquisite painting *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon*.<sup>121</sup> Doty, who revisited ‘his’ painting several times, also found that in the act of describing the painting to himself and “interiorising” it in his mind, he had, over time, infused the painting with himself and his own way of seeing, making it more and more his. What memory does, he suggests, is precisely what art does “which is

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<sup>116</sup> Peter Schjeldahl, “Bearing Fruit,” *The New Yorker*, April 6, 2009.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>120</sup> Kozol, September 14, 1969.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

to take the world within us and somehow make it ours, through the act of description, through memory, through...saying (or painting) how we see.”<sup>122</sup>

*In the Early World* offers a similarly intimate portrait: Richardson draws the reader into the classroom, offering glimpses into the minds of the students, their games, jokes, conversations and remarkable artwork. Like a still life painter, he tells the story from up close rather than from afar, offering a detailed description of what he did, rather than a theoretical exegesis on why he did it.

The configuration of the book, more anthology than text, demands a different kind of reading. It separates the reader from previous modes of reading and at the same time raises the question of what is worth reading about in educational literature. The book is evidence that in print Richardson remains true to himself. Eschewing the position of educational expert, he works integratively, saying in pictures and poems what cannot be said in words, inviting the reader to share in his humanist vision in their own way.

For all its simplicity and lack of pretence, the book makes a number of compelling assertions. The children’s exquisite poetry about cattle, grasses, spiders, birds, their ruminations on the dark, on waking up, on walking to school, affirm that the most powerful learning arises out of the children’s own lives and experiences. It confirms that the everyday, the commonplace and the taken-for-granted can provide a gateway into the field of the imagination in intellectual work. The book demonstrates that learning through the arts raises students’ potential for self-knowledge, critical discernment, imagination, understanding, awareness and empathy for others, and affirms that the arts have an important role to play in the fostering of community and social reform. His intimate portrait reveals teaching and learning as forms of human artistry. It asserts that the children’s paintings, poetry, writing are worthy of celebration, documentation, and preservation, for in these we see the meaning making promises of human culture.

At this point in our educational development it is worth pausing to ask how Richardson might have taught had he been required to implement the government’s new policy of national standards in 2010? What would his students’ poetry have looked like if they were working together to achieve the same skill set at the same level?

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.



At a time when educational thinking and policy is increasingly dominated by economic relevance, the educational approach of Richardson reminds us both of the role experimental schools play in contributing ideas of a democratic society while also demonstrating that education can be so much more than the narrowly instrumental. Richardson's approach calls into question a good deal of how we proceed in education today providing us with some utopian wisdom for another way of educating.

## Epilogue

### Richardson's Return to Oruaiti

Biographers have often commented on the inevitable tension between being both historian and artist, and the degree to which these two aims do not always coincide. In the preceding chapters I have framed moments of Richardson's early life and schooling experiences against the historical landscape of his times, moving between past and present. In both conceptualization and configuration I have sought to find a form – what Eisner describes as a “frame for awareness”, which would enlarge our understandings of the themes the dissertation addresses.<sup>1</sup> Eisner's reflection on the hermeneutic nature of this transformative process is relevant here, particularly when considered in relation to the role of both Richardson and myself as writers seeking to create a vision. He states:

The writer starts the process of writing by seeing and by having an emotional response that is then transformed into words intended to capture the flavor of that response. Thus...the writer starts with a vision and ends with words. The reader, however, starts with the writer's words and ends with vision. The circle is complete.<sup>2</sup>

When I first read Richardson's book, *In the Early World*, the calibre of the students' work, the sensitivity of Richardson's observations and his desire to locate himself as teacher out of the mainframe, moved me to understand his work more deeply. I wanted to know more about his educational philosophy and pedagogy, the nature of the context in which he worked, and the significant role of historical developments in arts and crafts during the fifty years that preceded him. My long correspondence with Richardson, interviews with his former students and colleagues and archival research offered new understandings about these phenomenon from within scholastic domains.

When, however, as a recurring theme in our correspondence, Richardson expressed a desire to return to Oruaiti School, I realised that such a trip presented an opportunity to experience what I had not yet experienced – a chance to meet history in the moment, to see Richardson once again as a teacher with his students in the natural environment

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 88-89

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

surrounding Oruaiti. A visit to Oruaiti offered an opportunity for me to have yet another ‘reading’ of Richardson and Oruaiti in a direct, experiential manner, a chance for Richardson, his students and myself to see anew together the experience of Oruaiti after more than fifty years. What would the interactions between Richardson and his students reveal about the nature of the student teacher relationship at Oruaiti? Would being back in the landscape which first attracted Richardson to Oruaiti affirm his artistic and scientific orientation to the study of the natural world? What would the students’ responses to this reunion reveal about the legacy of this educational experience for their own lives?

Following is a short annotated photographic essay, which combines images from this return trip to Oruaiti with excerpts from Richardson’s letters.

### **The Itinerary**

In September, 2008, Richardson accepted my offer to drive him from Auckland to Oruaiti to revisit the people and places he remembered so vividly. Our trip to Oruaiti School was multifaceted and with the help of others we planned a number of activities over the space of three days. First, we stopped in Whangarei to visit Richardson’s former student Varley Foster. The following day, the principal of Oruaiti School, Susan Turner, arranged a welcome ceremony and morning tea for Richardson at the school. She invited a number of his former students, several of whom are now grandparents of current students at the school: seven attended. Finally, on our last day, we explored the greater Mangonui region re-visiting the vistas, trees, beaches and cliff faces that Richardson remembered so vividly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Note: All photographs dated 2006-2008 were taken by myself. Historical photographs were taken and supplied by Richardson.

## *Revisiting Oruaiti: September 25-28, 2008*



Figure 22: Oruaiti landscape, August 2008

Letter from Richardson in anticipation of the visit, August 20, 2008

The reason I want to go back for this last time is just to see if when I am confronted again by the river, the hills, the clouds rolling over them, the poplars and so on, if any new wisdom or feelings come back to me. Perhaps previous unresolved ones. There is something very emotional about the noises of the river, the wind in the manuka, the light filtering...I expect an element of rest, quiet pleasure, resolve, even joy from it. I hope. It was part of my understanding when I was the mahita. I must have exuded environmental joy and pleasure...But it was so very simple, as you will see – no Tane Mahutas!<sup>4</sup> Only manuka, cabbage trees, ferns on the banks...I hope I can do all this again and get a conclusion to unresolved feelings and memories. So many of the tamariki have passed away.<sup>5</sup>

Letter from Richardson, September 8, 2008

Wonderful to hear of your approaching footsteps and our trip together to those wonderful places which the tamariki and I got to know each other. I am overjoyed at the prospect...I have been thinking of our trip and who we may meet...I'm so excited I want to leave now.<sup>6</sup> On Thurs 25th I will be packed ready to join you as we elope to years past and a remote

<sup>4</sup> Tane Mahuta: Maori "Lord of the Forest". New Zealand's largest known living kauri tree. Manuka, Cabbage trees and ferns are commonly found native species.

<sup>5</sup> ESR Per. Com., August 20, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 5, 2008.

tribe of northerners...It will, I think, be my last visit to some of the past...<sup>7</sup>



Figure 23: Oruaiti School, 1950



Figure 24: Oruaiti School entrance, 2008

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<sup>7</sup> ESR Per. Com., September 8, 2008.





**Figure 25: Richardson's first class at Oruaiti, 1949**

From left to right: (back row) Rex Foster, Joe and Julia Matthews, Joy Foster, Eva and Mary Garton; (middle row) Varley Foster, Trevor Foster, Alma Powell, Linda Foster, Claire Matthews, (front row) unknown, Joyce Foster, Rosalie Hills, Ross Walker, Irene Matthews, Pearl Hancox.



**Figure 26: Meeting of Richardson's former Oruaiti students, 2008**

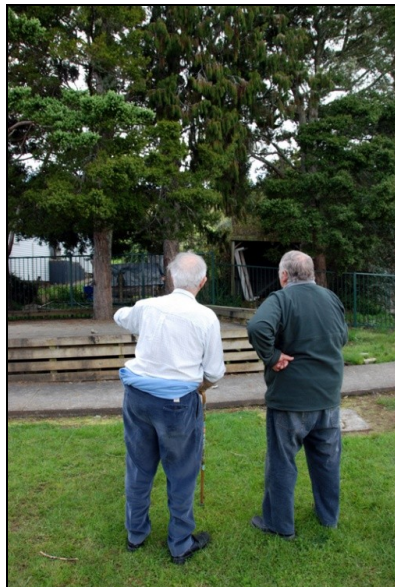
Pictured above (from front left) Rosalie Hills, Alma Powell, Susan Turner (current principal) Rewi Henare. (Back row from left) Elwyn Richardson, Allan Foster, John Foster, Colin Foster, Les Foster.



**Figure 27: Tears and laughter, Richardson with his former students in the Oruaiti staff room, 2008**



**Figure 28: Richardson's Former students in the Oruaiti staff room, 2008**



**Figure 29: Richardson and Allan Foster visiting the tree they planted 40 years ago, Oruaiti School, 2008**

### Excerpts from Richardson's letters following the trip

October 4, 2008

...Thank you for the wonderful parcel of prints. I gaze and gaze... Oruaiti has been metamorphosed...How pleased I was when Allan told all that he had helped me plant my tree! Ece! People from 40 years ago captured, and my tree in the grove...that was something.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 30: Varley Foster and Richardson, 2008

September 28, 2008: I was utterly thrilled to see Varley again. He was my philosopher and my botanist. He was my art director.<sup>9</sup> ...I loved the man for his sensitivities and talents as an expressive artist and for his humanness.<sup>10</sup> ... I am still amazed that so many were there in person (and probably in spirit)!<sup>11</sup>



Figure 31: Richardson greeting former students Alma and Rosalie on arrival at Oruaiti School, 2008

<sup>8</sup> ESR. Per. Com., October 4, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> ESR. Per. Com., September 28, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> ESR. Per. Com., January 1, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> ESR. Per. Com., September 28, 2008.





**Figure 32: Richardson and Kaumatua Rewi Henare, Oruaiti School 2008**

On our arrival to Oruaiti School, Richardson was formally welcomed with a powhiri, which was followed by an address from former student Rewi Henare, (pictured above and below) who is now the local kaumatua of Ngati Kahu ki Whangaroa.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 33: Rewi Henare (centre) with large drum, Oruaiti music performance, 1956**

Letter from Richardson, January 1, 2008:

...I dwell upon the visit as I call the trip in my mind. It was wonderful for me to meet Alan, Rosalie, Varley, Rewi et al.<sup>13</sup> Rewi was our kaumatua – his word kept everyone in line! I have loved him always for his gift to our education.<sup>14</sup>

I have been musing over your letter following our Oruaiti visit. The astounding thing was that you met the significant boys and girls who, at

<sup>12</sup> Powhiri: a ceremony of welcome offered to visitors by Maori; Kaumatua - respected Maori elder or leader.

<sup>13</sup> ESR. Per. Com., January 1, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

that time were my class, or part of it. I was astounded to hear their acceptances of me and our leadership of Oruaiti. They were so wonderful I almost cried! Did you get the feelings of that class of long ago? And the Maori / Pakeha respect for each other, probably very uncommon in schools generally, but at our school it was live, warm respectful and was about getting on with life with a felt consciousness of each others worth. How I loved them for it.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 34: Rewi Henare and his brother Michael Henare with Oruaiti lino blocks 2005**

Rewi has kept the lino blocks he and his brother Michael made while they were at Oruaiti School. Michael, who died in 2007 after a long illness, remembered his years at Oruaiti vividly in an interview in February 2006:

When I did the fantail [lino block pictured above] it didn't take me long to do it and you know I can still remember carving it and running it through the screen – I still remember doing that because we used to do it all ourselves. It's unbelievable – even my daughter – Jacque and the grandkids, they say, "Papa did you do that?" I say, "Yes." They say, "When?" I say, "You should be able to see the date, it was a long, long time ago."

... We never argued at the school, everything was, you know, everybody was happy... I think those were the happiest days of my life at school anyway – because we went to the convent school before that and those were the worst days of my life. You know being taught under nuns and the priests and that – Oh it's shocking and we couldn't wait to get the hell out of it. And then of course when we left there and we went

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

straight to Oruaiti, and it was a different world you know. Yeah, it was beautiful. It was awesome and when Rewi first told me about the book [*In the Early World*] I couldn't believe it, until I came back from Ozzie one time and he showed me the first one he got. It was just unbelievable, eh. He said, "You remember one of the lino works you did?" And I said, "Yeah a fantail" that was the only one I could remember and then after that I saw the crab, and... the eel.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 35: Michael Henare, Fantail as held above

<sup>16</sup> Interview Michael Henare (1943-2007) following a visit to Waimahana, November 2005; For reproductions of the prints Michael mentions see p. 43 of *In the Early World* for 'Eel/Fish in weeds', p. 211 for 'Fantail', and p. 58 of Richardson's *Into A Further World*, 2001, for 'Crab'. Rewi holds his lino block titled 'Mustering Hipi' which features on p. 6 of Richardson's *Creative Processes in Language Arts Teaching*, 2003. N.B. In most of Richardson's publications Rewi is referred to by his English name, David Henry / Heremia / Henare.





Figure 36: Michael Henare: Eel



Figure 37: Rewi Henare: Mustering Hipi, as held above

### Excerpts from Richardson's Letters Following the Oruaiti trip

...Firstly a great thanks for the letter and the memories, now, of a wonderful trip north, the Oruaiti men and women and memories flooding in! My bach at Rangikapiti road, walking on the sand of Coopers [beach] (not a bach in sight!)<sup>17</sup>

I still feel so strongly the remarkable nature of a reunion of so many from so long ago...I am pleased that the meeting was so good for all who came to it...I think now that my respect for them was accepted. It became that certain 'something' which visitors found so strange – the respect, each for each, as well as for the best qualities in everything...<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Bach: a small holiday or beach house, originally shortened from 'bachelor pad'.

<sup>18</sup> ESR. Per. Com., January 9, 2009.

...I have given a lot of thought recently to fleeting images of our Oruaiti visit and those men and women from yesteryears who came to see and talk with the mahita. And the house I built on the hill, just as it was when I finished it – as if time and erosion was not to fix its claws on that house. And a small stone sculpture of mine in the garden out the side door. Of course I had to leave it there. It was my mark, Elwyn had been here.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 38: Richardson and the beach cottage he built from timber he milled himself, September 2008**

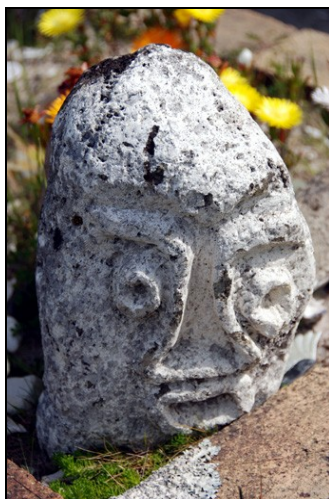


**Figure 39: Beach cottage view**

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<sup>19</sup> ESR. Per. Com., December, 2008.





**Figure 40: Stone sculpture carved by Richardson while teaching at Oruaiti and left in the garden of the beach cottage**

Excerpts from Richardson's letters following the Oruaiti trip:

You have been on my mind, as I search the dandelions for chimney sweepers, but it is too early – the spores of past dust have not yet seeded themselves. I've done this search almost all over spring and summer months in past years – a Wal-ian obsession? ...It is strange that all of these significant people (except the dead – and even perhaps those) attended our gathering...<sup>20</sup> It still astounds me in that what we did at Oruaiti mattered so much and not in a dependent manner, rather in the collecting of so many human values...<sup>21</sup>

...If I live to a grand old age I'll go north again but for now that was enough. ...I muse over it almost every day! The poem 'Golden lads and girls all must / as chimney sweepers / come to dust' is from *Cymbeline*. ...Few poems ever are as close to life and death as this one...Of course Shakespeare was a keen botanist and his tastes appear often in his writings – you'd know this I'm sure. He must have studied dandelions – where 'chimneysweepers' live their saprophytic life. It is, as you know, a fungus. Wal taught me about its role in the field. So chimneysweepers explode into a fine black powder made up of spores of propagation, which blow in the wind, and / or are carried by insects (bees particularly) from flower to flower. I had a most fortunate early educational life with Wal. A life's reflection, an outlook for life. Shakespeare, indeed, appears to be a Wal!

I think, was I too perhaps, a Wal? There I was again talking with Varley as he folded and rubbed his fingers years ago ...He was, as you saw, my astounding wonderful sensitive student. I collected ergot for my 'war effort' and mum posted it off to Auckland hospital where ergotamine was fractionally distilled from the powder. Our farm produced a great

<sup>20</sup> ESR. Per. Com., December, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> ESR. Per. Com., January 1, 2009.

deal of dandelion which it grew saprophytically and then it matured and spored into ergot. I dwell on our trip a lot.<sup>22</sup>

...I do not know if Shakespeare was an alchemist. I would easily believe that those who tended the wounded in battle would have known about the values of chimneysweepers. (I remember putting some on a cut I had; and Wal snorted at me and asked was I a wizard?) I remember being terribly sad and lonely at Dilworth [boarding school] as a small boy, wandering off a little from the cricket match the 'big boys' were playing. I lay in longish grass away from the mowed field and staring through seed heads suddenly saw, yes it was, a sweeper! I filled a matchbox full and a master saw me and asked what I was up to. I was terrified I had done something wrong and would be caned, so I explained my interest in the fungus. He cross-examined me and dragged all out I knew and had done as a 'golden boy.' He in a small way became a Wal and he complimented me for my science – in fact he remained friendly to me for all my sad career at that awful school.<sup>23</sup>

In the fourth form he made me head lab boy in charge of the chemistry lab. It was a link to friendship which protected me somewhat when others were lined up for a thrashing on the backside, most of the time I was set aside for other punishment and was not thrashed. But not always. I was beaten a little over 40 times in my eight years of institutional life! I still pray now and then...that those who were so terribly cruel to us boys be punished. Perhaps I should now leave well enough alone? Time has erased so much hurt. Oruaiti, and even subsequently, those golden children, have erased the cruelties of my awful childhood.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 41: Richardson's farewell to Rewi Henare, September 2008**

<sup>22</sup> ESR. Per. Com., October 5, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> ESR. Per. Com., December 22, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> ESR. Per. Com., December 22, 2008.



**Figure 42: View from the beach cottage**



**Above: Richardson on Cooper's beach examining fossils, September 2008**





**Figure 43: Richardson on Cooper's Beach, September, 2008**

Excerpt from Richardson's letter following the Oruaiti trip, January 9, 2009:

...You have made your entrance and now your exit, and it was all so wonderfully good. Dear lady, I loved it and what's more I saw places and had feelings which I thought I had forgotten. I thank you for the magnificence of it all – the places, distances, views of the lovely north...

Our visit to Oruaiti School and its environs provided me with a glimpse of Richardson living again as a teacher-learner on his native pedagogical ground. The fact that he viewed this visit as his last, gave his encounters with his former students a particular poignancy, for the reunions were at once greetings and farewells. As I viewed from afar, I had a sense of Richardson saying things to his tamariki that he had wanted to say for forty years. They were simple things, but deeply felt – expressions of gratitude for the sheer joy of it all, statements of esteem and affirmations of the value of his former students as fellow human beings, from whom he had learned a great deal.

Richardson's letters in anticipation of the trip revealed his view of the occasion as a kind of grand experiment. He wanted to revisit Oruaiti, he said, to see if when he was confronted by the river, hills, clouds and poplars, any new realisations or feelings would come back to him. To change something and to assess the result is a simple idea, but like

his early experiments in the changing shed at boarding school, and his simple questions to his students, such as, ‘Do you like it?’ ‘Would you change anything?’ ‘Will you say any more?’ such questions most often led to new understandings.

Accompanying Richardson as he walked along Cooper’s beach, I had an impression of what his students must have experienced as they investigated the rivers, trees, plants, animals and farms of their valley. Stopping frequently to muse over a rock or shell he would examine it closely, describe what he already knew, marvel at its aesthetic qualities and wonder aloud at what he did not know. One was naturally drawn into an orbit of curiosity and appreciation and learned something in the process. Such capacity for wonder, the blurring of the lines between curiosity, play and experimentation has been noted as a characteristic of scientists’ greatest discoveries. They have often felt themselves as children, asking simply stated questions. Reflecting on his own life, for example, not long before his death, Isaac Newton stated:

I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea shore and diverting my self in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great green ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.<sup>25</sup>

From a young age, science was part of Richardson’s life. His experiments with fluttermills in the farm drains with his mentor Wal as a preschooler demonstrated an early scientific commitment to experimentation as the basis for developing his own understanding. At Dilworth too, science offered both meaning and beauty in what was largely a lonely and brutal experience. In the ‘Upper Changing Shed’ story, for example, recounted in chapter nine, Richardson made one small change after another, first shutting the door of the shed tightly behind him so that it was dark, next, raising his head closer to the largest ‘star’ in the tin roof with a pillow, and finally placing a piece of paper on the wood to catch the pricks of light, which he first mistook for beetles. This last change revealed the shimmering splendour of the puriri tree projected onto the paper through the pinhole in the roof – an aesthetic and scientific revelation. For Richardson, our visit to Oruaiti was yet another fascinating experiment. It was evident to me that science was not merely a subject for Richardson, it was his ontology, his way of being in the world.

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<sup>25</sup> Isaac Newton, cited in Horace Freeland Judson, *The Search for Solutions* (Austin, Texas: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1982), p. 5.

Similarly, Shakespeare's 'Golden girls and lads,' which never seemed far from Richardson's mind during our visit, was not only a melancholic rumination on mortality and a bittersweet tribute to his students who had already died, but it was also, like the puriri tree, a scientific marvel. He celebrated the scientific properties of the fungus as much as its metaphoric qualities and saw no division between the two. Philosophically, for Richardson as for Dewey, the pedagogical promise of scientific method was its potential for offering a framework for teaching children how to think. In Dewey's words:

... From this point of view, science signifies, I take it, the existence of systematic methods of inquiry, which, when they are brought to bear on a range of facts, enable us to understand them better and to control them more intelligently, less haphazardly and with less routine.<sup>26</sup>

Freedom from routine in the sense that Dewey means seems to point more towards scientific method as an attitude of mind, as a way of conceptualising experience, as a way of constituting meaning. For Richardson's students working in this way meant turning a scientific gaze on their own lives and the world around them, making connections between things, working "less haphazardly, more intelligently, with less routine". *In the Early World* demonstrates that much of the strength of the children's creative work lay in their ability to relate their individual experience, as Mary Matiu's poem, 'Telephone Wires' illustrates:

In the far away distance  
I can hear the telephone wires  
Singing in churches  
Like Pakehas<sup>27</sup>

As a teacher, Richardson felt that he was his science.

The kids saw me as a man of science; one of clay and intense fires in kilns; another of fossils and sea wrack and skills. I was a forester who knew the trees and even birds.

I don't think that any of my tamariki ever became something because of me and my teaching, but, of this I am sure, they all, every one, were given open minds and keen eyes to observe and love what God gave us: the total environment.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Dewey, *The Sources of a Science of Education*, 1929, pp. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Pakeha: Maori for a New Zealander of Caucasian descent or not of Maori bloodlines.

<sup>28</sup> ESR. Per. Com., January 10, 2009.



**“Only like a boy playing on the sea shore...”**

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A (i)

### Example: Initial contact letter # 1

Name  
Street address  
City

Date

Dear (XXX),

My name is Margaret MacDonald and I am a doctoral student in the school of Educational Studies and Human Development at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. I am currently researching Elwyn Richardson's work at Oruaiti School from 1949 to 1962. I am writing to ask if as a former student you would be interested in participating in my research through sharing some of your memories of this time at Oruaiti.

I have tried to contact former students by matching student names on Oruaiti art work and in Richardson's books with the telephone directory. As a result, I am not sure that I have contacted the correct person. I would be grateful if you would take a moment to fill out the attached sheet (even if you are not a former student) and return it in the self addressed envelope provided. Many thanks.

- ☐ Yes I did go to Oruaiti School
- ☐ No I didn't go to Oruaiti School
- ☐ No I didn't go to Oruaiti School but I think I know who you are looking for. Their contact details are:
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Yes I am happy to have a conversation with you about my memories of Oruaiti School.
- ☐ No I would rather not talk about Oruaiti School with you.

I would like to talk with you by Telephone ☐

Email

☐

Correspondence

☐

Face to face conversation

☐

My telephone number  
is \_\_\_\_\_

The best time of day/evening for you to call me  
is \_\_\_\_\_

My email is \_\_\_\_\_

- \* If you happen to know the contact details for any other former Oruaiti students who attended the school when Elwyn Richardson was working there and you think they would be happy for me to contact them, please add their contact details below.

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Any further comments or suggestions

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## Appendix A (ii)

### Example: Participant Information Letter

To: XXX

Date:

Dear XXX,

My name is Margaret MacDonald. I am a Ph.D. student in the School of Educational Studies and Human Development at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch. I am studying the work of Elwyn Richardson at Oruaiti School in the 1950s and 1960s. I am writing to ask if you might be willing to share some of your memories of your time at Oruaiti School.

The purpose of my research is to examine the development of art and craft education in the first half of the twentieth century and to explore Richardson's work at Oruaiti as a successful and innovative educator within this historical setting.

With regard to Richardson's work at Oruaiti School, Elwyn Richardson's books provide a record, but do not tell the story of what this kind of education meant to you as a student at the centre of it all. Samples of your wonderful artwork and creative writing appear in his books but there is no record of your experience of creating these works, or a sense of how this might have shaped your thoughts about teaching, learning or creativity in your own life since this time.

My hope is that through talking with former students, art advisors, Elwyn Richardson himself, teachers and educationalists, I can come to better understand the strengths and limitations of his approach. There are very few records of this kind in New Zealand.

I would love to have an opportunity to have a conversation with you. This could happen in the form of a face-to-face interview, by correspondence, e-mail, or telephone interview – whichever would suit you best. I envisage that your involvement with the project will not take more than 1-2 hours of your time. I would like to record the interviews, if possible, and would be happy to send you a copy of the transcript to make any changes you desire. I would return a copy of your transcript to you to keep. If I have any further questions arising from the interview, I will check these with you. If you desire confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used and all identifying information deleted or altered. You would also of course, have the right to withdraw at any time if you no longer wanted to be involved with the project.



This research has been approved by the Dean of Post Graduate Studies at the University of Canterbury. The title of this project is Elwyn Richardson and the Early World of Art Education in New Zealand. It is being carried out for the purposes of a PhD. under the supervision of Dr. Janinka Greenwood and Dr. John Freeman-Moir who can be contacted at the University of Canterbury on 364 2537. They would be pleased to discuss any questions you may have regarding the project.

I have included a consent form below for you to sign and return to me if you are happy to participate. If you have any further questions or would like to contact me directly concerning any of this – my home phone number is [XXX] and email [XXX]. Thank you for considering my request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

## Appendix A (iii)

### Example: Consent Form

I have read and understood the attached introduction sheet to the project. On this basis I agree to participate in the project and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved if I wish.

I understand also that I may withdraw from the project at any time.

Name (please print):.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Please tick below how you would like to begin our conversation

Face to face interview ☐

Email correspondence ☐ Email address.....

Written correspondence ☐ Preferred address.....  
.....

Telephone Interview ☐ .....  
Ph. number.....

Please suggest a good time of day for me to call you: .....

I am happy for our interview *to be recorded* with the understanding I will be given the opportunity to make changes as outlined in the information letter above ☐

I would prefer for our conversation *not to be recorded* ☐

I am happy for my own name to be used in publication of the results of this project ☐

I would prefer to use a pseudonym in the publication of the results of this project ☐

I am happy for photographs and examples of creative work from my school to be used in the results of this project. ☐

I am happy for photographs of myself to be used in the results of this project ☐

## Appendix B

### Example of semi-structured interview questions for former Oruaiti Students

1. What do you remember about your time at Oruaiti?
2. How was the day structured typically? How did you get into all the things you did – such as nature study, pottery, painting, model making, drawing, lino printing, writing etc.?
3. Was art especially valuable/important to this learning? Can you say why?
4. What art and language writing work do you remember most? What do you think of this now after so many years? Do you still have any of your work from this time?
5. What do you remember about the materials there?
6. Do you recall a poem that you wrote? Elwyn Richardson said that he read a lot of poetry to you all, do you remember this?
7. Was there any piece of art that another person did, that you remember as outstanding?
8. What did doing all of this art mean to you?
9. You also did a lot of environmental studies based around the river, beaches and hills of the area. Can you tell me more about how science was a part of the learning at Oruaiti?
10. Do you remember staying on after school or coming to school early to continue working on something that interested you?
11. Can you describe what kind of teacher Elwyn Richardson was?
12. Did you go on to a local high school after Oruaiti? What did you think of high school when you reached it? How were you academically in relation to your peers?
13. What did you go on to do after school? What are you doing now?
14. How do you feel about your time at Oruaiti School now? Can you think of any ways in which your time at Oruaiti might have influenced you?
15. Have you maintained an interest in anything that you did when you were at Oruaiti School, art, poetry, science or anything else?
16. Has your own education at Oruaiti affected the way you think about education now? If so, in what ways?
17. How would you feel about an Oruaiti art/language/science emphasis for your children/grandchildren?
18. Do you have a copy of *In The Early World* or any other book by Elwyn? If so, what do you think of this?

## Appendix C

### Individual Differences in Art as defined in the 1945 Tentative Art Scheme

#### Primitive Schematic Type

(Typically five-year-olds, but not uncommon up to ten years.)

Separate parts are completely defined, but are not necessarily joined; often they overlap. All the parts that go to make up a whole are not included – e.g., a drawing of a man may show head and limbs, but no body. The proportion between parts may have no relation to normal proportion. Hands and feet take many varied non-realistic forms. The co-ordination of parts is not stated: necks are rarely shown; the arms emerge from many positions, and shoulders are rarely drawn. Objects appear transparent. The front view is usually given. Movement is rarely depicted.

#### Schematic Type

(Typically ages seven, eight and nine; gradually less common as age increases but about one third adults do not go beyond this stage.)

There is a better relationship of part to part. Neck and shoulders tend to appear, and movement is shown more often. Transparent figures disappear. Usually each object in a situation is treated as a separate unit, so that objects in a drawing rarely overlap. Distance is shown by putting near objects at the bottom of the paper while far-away objects are placed near the top; this is planar perspective. The child renders the object most significant to himself the largest in the drawing; usually it makes little difference whether it is near or far away. Flowers and trees have no volume (appearance of being solid), and are treated as if in a flat pattern. Houses are often shown with the two ends transparent, so that activities inside may be seen.

#### Mixed Schematic Type

(Some children reach this stage about the age of nine. It is the stage of development typical of about one third of the population from eleven into adult life.)

This stage bears the characteristics of the previous schematic and the succeeding resemblance group. Drawings show objects in a situation as observed from one viewpoint; therefore objects overlap. There is better proportion in parts and wholes; better co-ordination in parts; joints become bent. Three-dimensional aspects are shown. An aerial viewpoint may be adopted, sometimes with attempts at linear perspective. There is sometimes a confusion of viewpoints such as a mixture of top and side-view. Volume is added to flowers. There is some attempt to show volume in other objects.

#### Resemblance Type

(Few children reach this stage until about the age of thirteen. By fifteen perhaps a third will have reached it, and there is probably little increase in the proportion in adult life.)

In this stage the child draws objects from one viewpoint. He indicates volume and spatial aspects. Proportions are fairly correct. Limbs look as though they are flexible.

Some modelling of shapes is seen. Three-quarter view is often used. Linear perspective is more or less correctly used...

It should be noted, first, that there is likely to be a very wide spread of abilities in a class. For example, in a typical standard four, the drawings of a few children may be of the primitive schematic type, most will be schematic, some will show the signs of the mixed schematic, and a very few will show the characteristics of the resemblance group.

Second, it should be noted that many children will reach the limit of their development at an early age, and are unlikely to develop any further even in adult life. They will remain in the mixed schematic, or schematic stage.

Third, the stage of a child's drawing ability is not an indication of his aesthetic appreciation. Some well-known artists use the mixed schematic type.

(From 1945 Tentative Art Scheme, Wellington, School Publications Branch. Department of Education, 1945, pp.7-9).

## Appendix D

### Example motivation for a painting lesson.

Tovey offers the following outlines for the motivations use for children's paintings:

As the edges of the paper set the frame for the children's paintings, so too should the motivations limit and shape the extent and manner of the children's creative explorations. Every motivation should be complete in itself, with a definite beginning and ending. Thus, energy is not dissipated but is contained within firmly sensed boundaries, thereby ensuring that sufficient is retained for the creative requirements of painting. Again, if a narrative is unusual, it is best to use a somewhat repetitive form in its telling – some person going somewhere, to another place or person; and the significances met in the outward journey are repeated in the return. This enables creative energy to be used within a given framework around somewhat familiar significances, and this naturally leads to a greater depth of understanding.

#### **Motivation:**

The Lowering grey clouds blew down the encircling hills and brought a cold mist swirling though the buildings being erected in the shopping centre.

The wind blew in strong gusts that lifted shavings, building paper, and even pieces of timber into the air. It was cold on your face, making your eyes water. It shook your body, and the men working on the scaffolds about the buildings had to stop what they were doing and hold tightly to supports. The foreman called all the carpenters and the labourers from the other building to the half-finished hall. For this had to be finished in seven days.

The men muttered amongst themselves, saying to one another that the wind was dangerously high. Their mood was grey and sullen like the swirling mist. It was getting thicker and dulling the colours – the reds to a menacing brick colour, the yellows and greens became greyed to colours that made you feel more dejected.

The grey mist blew colder on our faces. The men protested to the foreman, but he was insistent, and the men slowly climbed the ladders to the scaffolding about the framework of the hall.

After they had been on the scaffolding some time a gust stronger than any before shook the framework, and before he could clutch anything to save him, one man was caught up and lifted from the plank on which he was standing. As he fell he cried out in terror – a high piercing note – like a sea-gull's cry. We rushed towards him. He lay still on the ground, moaning and muttering. Molly knelt beside him and held his head against her body while Tom, breaking away, as we clustered around the man, ran to telephone for an ambulance. We hoped he would not die. And the grey mist blown by the cold wind still rushed down the hills and swirled around us like an evil spirit. It was a bad day. We

were holding back our tears for out fears for the man. We wished the horrible day would come to an end and the sun would shine again. Somehow in spite of everything we felt the man would get better.

(From *Children's Painting*, Wellington, School Publications Branch, Department of Education, 1972, pp. 12-13).

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